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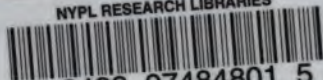
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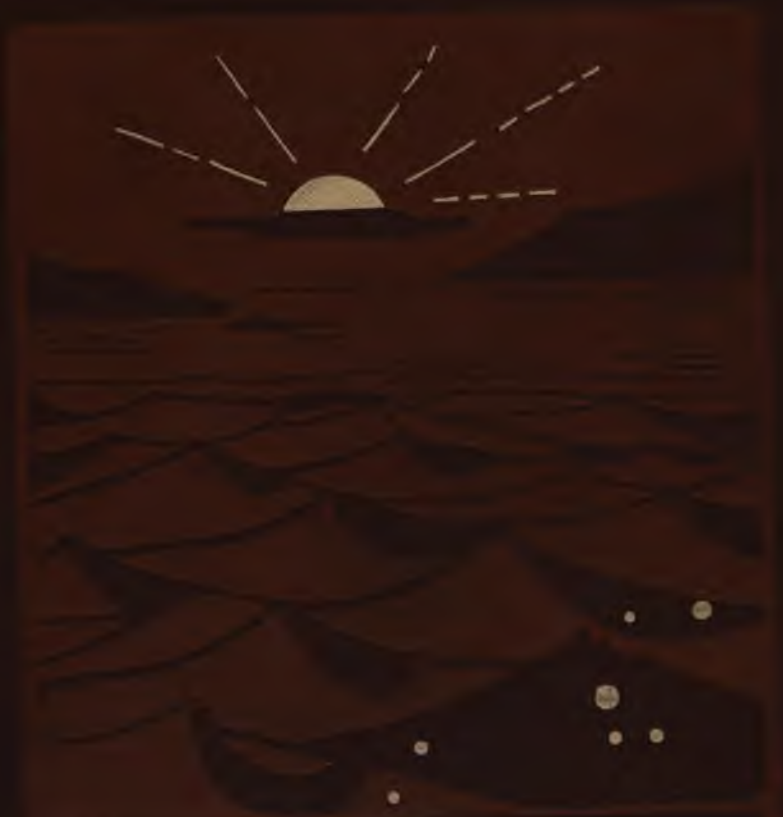
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JIMMY'S GENTILITY



HENRY FRANCIS DRYDEN



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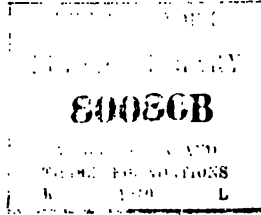
JIMMY'S GENTILITY

BY
Henry Francis Dryden



L.C.
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1915

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I REMINISCENCES — AND FEODORA . . .	1
II VAUDEVILLE	33
III THE BEAUTY AND THE BRIGAND . .	55
IV MY DOUBLE	88
V A ROMANCE OF THE LINKS	103
VI THE CONVICT PUGILIST	129
VII FUTILE WOOING	158
VIII THE MASQUERADER	185
IX PHILOMELA, THE ZAGRAB HOURI . .	224
X A STRANGE VISITOR — AND THE PRESI- DENCY	253
XI THE BARON AND THE JEWELS . . .	276
XII CONSPIRATORS	300
XIII THE PATENT OF GENTILITY . . .	320
XIV WEDDING BELLS	341
XV THE ENSEMBLE	360

37

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CHAPTER I

REMINISCENCES — AND FEODORA

In conformity with the traditional custom which expects every man who writes his story — or not to use too strong language, his episodes — to display his patent of gentility, I commence by stating to my readers, with a certain degree of pride, that I was born in San Francisco, the metropolis of the Pacific Coast at present, and formerly the chief city during the gold days, when my father came with the Argonauts.

So much for my native city. As for my family, it would only appear natural, regard being had to the mining industry to which I devoted my energies as the president of an important corporation, that I should display in my family tree the name of some famous mining engineer, or of some great financier; but, being the very slave of truth, I will content myself with stating that my father was a miner.

Though he did not rise to any official position as an operator, my father was reputed to be very proficient with a pick and shovel or a tamping-rod and spoon. In fact, I am only displaying our hereditary modesty when I say that my father's

talents were not confined to a single art; for, in truth, nature had adapted him for various kinds of labor, and the restlessness of his mind led him to try them all with equal ardor. An excellent musician, a decorator of the greatest taste, he at the same time could plan and build a house, forge a horse-shoe, or even promote mining companies and sell stock certificates, which were very popular in those days. The skill he evidenced in these varied arts caused him to wander to numerous places in search of a market for his forthcoming activities; but, unfortunately, he was wont to leave lucrative employment for the mere pleasure of seeking variety.

In my father's house on the North Beach hills, now thickly-studded with the homes of San Francisco's alien population, I was born. Its framework was formed of heavy beams, and from the windows one commanded a far-reaching panorama of sea and shore. My father had bought the dingy dwelling, fearful and strange in design, and conspicuous among its more modest neighbors on account of the queer turrets and minarets, cupolas and verandas. He had furnished the rooms with gaudy ornamental furniture and glaring pictures hung on the walls. I possess an excellent memory; still, though my digressions shall date back that far and even farther, I cannot remember the day of my birth. I have learned since, however, that it was the seventh day of April, 1876. I am inclined to believe that I came into the world with a mashie

or a brassie in my hand, for from my earliest youth golf clubs were my toys and delight: I learned to use them as other children learn to read and write. I need not say that my guardians had frequently to scold the young golfer roundly, when the ball, badly struck, caromed through the adjacent window-panes. As for Doctor Jones, he laughed at these slight accidents, and said, jokingly, that the window had laid me a stymie, and that, as I had holed the ball, I could not but become a wonderful golfer. I do not pretend that I ever realized the good doctor's predictions, but it is certain that I have ever felt an irresistible inclination for the game of golf, aside from my firm decision to become a great mining operator.

How often, in my boyish dreams, did a good fairy whisk me away to the surroundings I had pictured for my future, where I ruled a sumptuous mining office suite, with "President" on the door of my private office, which was carpeted with softest velvet to harmonize with the mahogany furniture. And in the corner stood, always, a well-filled bag of polished golf-clubs. Dreams of these articles represented to me the implements of my chosen work and play; and by these dreams my ruling passion was fed.

By the time I was ten years of age I made many trips out to the golf course where the army officers played, partly through the kindness of Stephen Carroll, and partly through my mother's illness, for which Mr. Carroll recommended the game of

golf. This Mr. Carroll was a mining man from Mexico. Having his headquarters in San Francisco, he had joined the little golf club of those days, where I went as a caddy for my mother, and I profited so well by his lessons that in a very short time I could equal my teacher. I fancy I can still see and hear this whole-souled man, when, stroking his black beard, he roared with energetic satisfaction,

"Why, the little rascal can out-drive me! Some day he will be crowding my place as president of the mine!"

The compliment flattered my childish vanity, and I redoubled my efforts to imitate Mr. Carroll. To my dear mother I often confided my wish to have him for my second father, for almost five years had passed since the premature action of a fuse led to the untimely taking off of my own parent. But my mother would only shake her head and hold me very close to her while she gazed at the portrait of my father which was hung in her room. With Mr. Carroll's departure for the mines, my pleasure ended. How well I remember the last time he saw my mother!

On a cold afternoon of September, when San Francisco was wrapped in a gray mist, my mother was reclining in a leather chair in the house on Telegraph Hill, reading a note which the mail carrier had just left. She was expecting to see the writer of the note, Stephen Carroll, who had writ-

ten her that he was coming down from Sacramento by the night train.

My mother was twenty-eight, five feet eight in height, round, plump, but sturdily built, with a small waist and dark hair which, though luxuriant, was rather fine. Her face was classic: rather round and soft in contour, with elegant, almost Roman features, and an olive complexion, clear and healthy, and large, solemn, and perhaps sad brown eyes, full of pride, courage, and reverence, — full, too, of quick sympathy and understanding, the eyes of a woman who was also mentally and physically alert. The look of wonder, a look most beautiful in the eyes of children, was mingled with an apparent self-reliance which suggested her ability to overcome difficulties. These are my recollections of my mother.

The room in which she read the letter from Mr. Carroll looked out across the bay toward the white ferry-boats plying across the glassy water. Presently she threw aside the letter and gazed out of the window. Just as she had finished doing this, there came a knock on the open door and I saw Aunt Eleanor, as I called her, although she was not a family connection but Doctor Jones's sister-in-law. Doctor Jones occupied the first floor of our house. Aunt Eleanor entered.

"What is it?" asked my mother, replying to her knock.

"Mr. Carroll," said Aunt Eleanor.

"Stephen!" cried my mother, getting up out of her leather chair quickly. "Where is he?"

"At your door!" roared a loud voice.

Aunt Eleanor departed and a florid man entered the room and took both her hands, which were reached out to him.

"Why did you give up your pretty rooms down stairs?" exclaimed Mr. Carroll, still grasping my mother's hands.

"Reasons of economy; one has to live. The tenants downstairs are very estimable people. I'm so glad you came to see me."

She let his hands go, and he gathered me into his arms.

Mr. Carroll was a man of medium height of about twenty-five, with a large frame, a heavy, square face, with coarse flat features, and small black eyes. His figure was beginning to fill out, and showed signs of a tendency to put on fat. He was over-dressed, flashily not fashionably, yet he suggested a business man, not necessarily a merchant. As he gazed at my mother the cheerfulness which had radiated from his countenance when he entered the room died away.

"I've come down from Sacramento to have you tell me about it," he said in his resounding voice. "Do you know"—and here his voice dropped a trifle—"that your answer to my note did not tell me anything about your being compelled to rent part of your house."

"The situation is not serious."

She sat down, but Mr. Carroll continued to stand.

"I came to see what is to be done for little Jimmy," he said.

It was my own thought to bring a tray and pour glasses of port. As soon as I had finished, Mr. Carroll drew a cigar from his pocket and lit it. Meanwhile, my mother lifted her glass from the tray and waited as he continued:

"I'm off for Mexico. I've come to plead with you again before I go. Is it so hard to love me?"

On his last words his resonant voice sounded bitter, almost angry.

"Don't scold, Stephen!" she exclaimed.

Mr. Carroll puffed vigorously at his cigar.

"You must not reproach me," she continued.

"Every woman wants to marry for love, and I don't love you. Besides, you are twenty-five and I am twenty-eight. When I am forty-eight and you are forty-five, you will thank me for refusing you. Now drink your wine."

He laughed a loud, roaring laugh, drank some of his wine, puffed at his cigar and said:

"Is little Jimmy like his father?"

My mother was silent for a moment, with the glass of wine in her hand. At last she said:

"It's difficult to describe people, isn't it?"

"Ah, you didn't understand your husband."

"I'm not sure that I did. Sometimes a woman loves a man without knowing why."

Mr. Carroll, although three years her junior,

nodded his head with the air of a man of ripe judgment.

"Mr. Oyler — my husband — was away most of the time. He spent as much of his time with me as he could spare. He was a miner — and Jimmy says he will be one when he is grown."

"A miner!"

"Yes."

"Are you sure some other man will not win you from me? — I am a miner too."

"I shall never forget Mr. Oyler. I can never love anyone else. He was wonderfully bright and clever and quite handsome."

He leaned toward my mother, and fixed his black eyes on her face. He replied:

"You are describing the man who won your love."

The tone of his voice made her look up at him quickly and exclaim:

"Forgive me, Steve! You have been so good and kind to me — I could not mean what you think."

He looked at her meditatively, even rather sadly.

"Your friendship has meant a great deal to me," he said. "I have hoped that it would develop into more than that. But you cannot love me and that is the end of the matter."

He sat down in an armchair on the other side of the room. He was determined to conceal his disappointment.

"Now you are yourself, Stephen," my mother said. "I want you to enjoy your trip to Mexico."

"Perhaps the Mexicans will not like me; but I will stay there only a short time."

My mother laughed, winking away her tears.

"Who can help liking jovial, generous-hearted Steve?"

He considered.

"But — no!" he said. "I shall not return soon. There must be no more games of golf. I cannot hide my feelings from you, and it will be better for us both if I do not see you often," he finished, rising.

My mother got up and held out her hands to him impulsively.

"Dear, dear Stephen!" she said.

"I must be going now," he said, shaking hands with me, and then turning to my mother.

He kissed her hand, bending over it for a moment, and strode out without another word. My mother stood for a moment watching his retreating figure. Then she dropped into the leather chair, folded me to her breast, and as she gazed at the portrait of my father, she wept softly.

My mother had often spoken to me of my father when in this mood, telling me of his antecedent bloods and tendencies and his family connections. The pleasure I anticipated from these talks must have been excessive to overcome my distress when I saw her tears. I crouched close against her as

soon as she began to speak of my father, his unselfish love and affection, which prompted the sweetest courtesies and inspired the most perfect and unwavering devotion.

More than an hour passed, and I remember her saying that to be well born is a heritage of inestimable worth, but that parentage is not everything in determining character and shaping destiny. I do not recall her words, but the substance of her words cautioned my young understanding against evil associates, and the value of education and religion was strongly urged in order to develop the elements of right choice and high purpose.

As night set in, I was still listening, hoping that my mother would speak of her plans for my future; for I must admit that, however interesting the blood of my ancestry, I had a keener interest in my mother's finances and the economies which she had mentioned to Mr. Carroll. My mother, however, said nothing in regard to these matters. I possessed at that time a quality which, I trust, I have not lost since, and that is extreme deference and respect; therefore I asked no questions. She ended her lesson in the following words:

"I will not tire you any more, Jimmy. I believe that you have inherited your father's characteristics, moral and intellectual as well as physical. This knowledge should serve as a guide to right associates, for without these even the best

inherited family traits and favoring external influences will be unavailing.”

Then she put me from her and rose from the big leather chair.

“You must promise me, Jimmy,” she said, “never to associate with any companions if you know I would not approve of them.”

“Oh, yes, mother, I give you my word,” I exclaimed, moved to tears by her earnestness; “and I can assure you, you will never repent having put faith in my promise.”

I made up my mind to keep my pledge, although I was not aware of the difficulties which were to be so many stumbling-blocks in the path of virtue I wished to follow. Much trouble I had, too, in withstanding the gibes of my older schoolmates, who, in order to hide their own bad conduct, strove to make their faults seem manly virtues. Sharpest pang of all, though, was the sacrifice I made by promising to refrain from caddying for the golfers.

The praise I received from the Sunday School superintendent, who prided himself in having noticed in me the stuff for an excellent business man, rewarded me for this sublime effort, and I may say I became, for six months, one of the most studious and attentive lads in my classes. At times I certainly regretted my trips to the golf course before my mother gave up the game, but recollecting my promises made to her, I held firm

against all temptation for half a year until I received the most serious shock of my whole life.

The moment arrived for my finding a home; my mother was no more — she left me with the family downstairs. Doctor Jones received me into his home. I cannot write of the occurrences following my bereavement. When I was big enough, I was dressed as a boy-hunter and represented as the nephew of Doctor Jones. Among themselves, the Doctor's family usually addressed me as James. Aunt Eleanor was my defender always, regardless of the rebukable nature of my pranks.

"The darling has the cutest red ringlets," she would say; "let me teach him why he has been into mischief. He doesn't know any better," she would add, and lead me away. To Aunt Eleanor I was always Jimmy. The children in the neighborhood called me Bricktop.

All the wrong I allowed myself was to pocket all the golf balls I could find on the course when I caddied for the doctor and his wife on the links, though I did not know how I should ever have a chance to put them in practice. At length the time came when by an unlucky slip and a fall into the ditch I lost the pleasure of going to the links, and was fated to dire disgrace.

I was acting as fore-caddie for the doctor and his wife. They were playing for the hole called Punch-bowl, so named because of its configuration. On either side of it ran barrancas which

were knee-deep with stagnant water. If your ball rolls up close enough to pass the upper edge of the excavation, it will stay on the putting-green. But if you play short, your ball will roll back into the stagnant waters of the barranca and your blasphemous caddie wades in after it and you count one stroke and play again. The doctor's ball rolled back into the barranca, and as I was searching for lost balls instead of watching his ball, the doctor came down to explore the sticky banks of the barranca in search of me as well as his ball. On the slimy edge of the water he beheld a clumsy, moving object.

The object proved to be a wet, shivering, whimpering caddie. The caddie had just emerged from the depths of the barranca, his pockets bulging with golf balls abandoned by unlucky players who had preceded the Joneses.

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Jones fearfully.

"Your lost golf ball," said the doctor dryly, pointing to my bulging pockets and leading me back to the course.

They took me home at once, as I was thoroughly chilled, and spent three days washing the ooze and black, oily slime out of my hair. Aunt Eleanor, as usual, made excuses for me and suggested that they call me Jimmy Punchbowl as a reminder of the episode. Doctor Jones suggested that time might prove the appropriateness of the name.

"I don't think so," said Aunt Eleanor, sup-

porting me again. "That kind of a physiognomy never leans toward the punch-bowl too frequently."

"What nationality is he?" Doctor Jones inquired swiftly.

Aunt Eleanor said no more. There are race characteristics that even a girl of twenty cannot determine.

A warm bath and a night of sound sleep revealed the fact that I was none the worse for my mishap, and the doctor was for placing me in some public institution after this occurrence.

"The little beggar waded out into that oily ditch," he fumed. "He was fishing for golf balls, which is a breach of the rules."

"It was all your fault for making a poor stroke, and the poor child was trying to save your ball," retorted Aunt Eleanor. "Weren't you, darling Jimmy?"

She embraced me warmly and in my excitement I only replied by frantically struggling to extricate myself. However, I was allowed to remain with the Joneses, and I was glad enough to escape becoming a public charge.

My time during the first year in their household was fully occupied thereafter in stuffing myself with food. Aunt Eleanor declared that if one could have persuaded me to stand still long enough, it would have been actually possible to see me grow. I grew at the rate of about an ounce a day for the best part of a year. At one time

I cherished a brief but illusory hope that I was going to grow into some sort of a pale and interesting type; perhaps the boys would call me Skinny!— But the symptoms rapidly passed off, and my aspect was that of a porker as pictured in the sign of the “Pig’n Whistle.”

Like most overgrown creatures, I was top-heavy and lethargic and very humble-minded. Still, there was a kind of respectful pertinacity about me. It requires some strength of character, for instance, to struggle out of a muddy ditch with your mouth and eyes obscured by slimy scum. It was quite impossible, too, short of driving me from their home, to prevent me from visiting the pantry for large quantities of loaf sugar, with which I kept my pockets bulging.

As time went on, the Joneses moved across the bay to Berkeley, where the doctor lectured at the university. The house stood against the dark hills, and golden haystacks stood in relief against the distant blue of the lazy ocean. The gardens were overgrown with roses and the air was laden with their exquisite perfume. The gorgeous bougainvillea covered the cottage with purple bloom. There were avenues of pepper trees or long alamedas of elm and gum trees that led to a wild little canyon where the moss grown oaks grew thickly, shut in by tawny hillsides clothed with short, dry grass. The driveway to the university buildings led in and out under mighty oaks toward a line of high, bare hills.

In one respect I lived up to my heritage of gentility. My manners were of the most courtly description and I had a most courteous greeting for all, book-agents included. I was particularly fond of engines and machinery. If I saw a local train in the distance, I would make a dash for the station and stand staring at the locomotive when it stopped. The crew would jeer at my red hair for the edification of the passengers, but my polite interest gained their friendship in time.

I was particularly attracted to music; and being able by reason of the low windows of the Berkeley cottages to look right into the rooms of most dwellings, I was accustomed whenever I heard music in a house to sidle close to the window of some astonished girl and peer inquiringly into the room to see the performer. Most of the ladies in the neighborhood got to know me in this way, but until they did they had a nervous start waiting for them.

I maintain that my intellect was lofty, but my memory was treacherous. The Jones household will never forget the day on which I was given an entire Camembert cheese.

One morning after breakfast Aunt Eleanor, accompanied by me, intercepted the kitchen maid hastening in the direction of the pantry, carrying the cheese in question at arm's length. The maid explained that its failure to ripen was due to the overheating of the rennet extract used in curdling

the milk, and that she was about to discard it as "frozen-buttermilk," as she called it.

"It seems a pity to waste it, miss," observed the kitchen maid; "but cook says that it will turn yellow and mould."

My outstretched arm and vigorous but respectful begging moved a direct negative to this opinion. Aunt Eleanor and the kitchen maid, who were both weak where I was concerned, saw a way to gratify their economical instincts and their natural affections simultaneously. The next moment I was loblollying about the house with a presentatious box of expensive Camembert in one hand and a spoon in the other. When I had eaten as much as I dared I still carried it about, taking it out to the stable, where I paused to attack it. Then I roamed about the garden, shaving off an occasional portion; on the front steps I lingered to have some more. It was a full-sized box and presently I paused. But soon I was in the house again, spooning away. Then I carried it about with me until I was summoned to perform some trifling duty. When I returned for my Camembert, I could not remember where I had left it!

As the premises were fast beginning to suggest a very untidy housekeeper, the women were very glad of it. This was particularly unfortunate because they were having a dinner party in honor of a professor who had recently come to lecture at the university, no less a personage, in fact, than

the Professor of Slavic Languages and his wife. Mrs. Jones was naturally anxious that there should be no embarrassments on such an occasion, and it distressed her to think that these people should imagine that they operated a cheesery on the premises.

However, dinner passed off quite successfully and they adjourned to the music-room. It was a chilly evening, and the professor's wife was accommodated with a seat by the fire in a large arm-chair, with a cushion at her back. When the gentlemen came in, Aunt Eleanor sang to them. Fortunately the music-room was a considerable distance from the front steps where I had left my cheese-crumbs.

During Aunt Eleanor's first song the doctor sat by the professor's wife. Her expression was one of patrician calm and well-bred repose; but it seemed to him she was not looking quite comfortable. He was not feeling quite comfortable himself. The atmosphere seemed a trifle oppressive; perhaps they had done wrong in having a fire at all. The professor's wife appeared to notice it too. She sat very upright, fanning herself mechanically, and seemed disinclined to lean back in her chair.

After the song was finished the doctor said:

"I am afraid you are not quite comfortable, Madame Lamsdorff. Let me get you a larger cushion."

"Thank you," said she, "the cushion I have

is delightfully comfortable, but I think there is something hard behind it."

Apologetically, the doctor plucked away the cushion. The lady was right; there was something behind it. It was my Camembert cheese!

Perhaps the doctor again threatened to place me in some public institution, for I noticed that Aunt Eleanor had been weeping when she came to my room on the following morning and told me what had occurred. She advised me to assure the doctor that I would be more careful in the future, which I hastened to do. This being accomplished, I believed I could go to bed without the slightest cause for apprehension, serene in the consciousness that Eleanor would defend me as long as she remained in the Jones household.

Let those who will sing the praises of boyhood joys; for my own part I can truthfully state that, though I was not averse to discipline and study, the happiest hours of my childish days were those in which I dreamed of independence and manhood, when I should have become a great financier and president of a mining company.

A walk to the post office was always part of my daily routine. Still, even this diversion contained many humiliating moments for one of my sensitive disposition, for I was always pathetically anxious to make friends with other lads, but was rarely successful. Little boys feared my red hair and bulk and ran away from me; most boys of my size were far older, and I was not far enough ad-

vanced to meet them on common mental-ground. Perhaps this was why I stopped suddenly one day when I saw a strange little girl with blue eyes and a tip-tilted nose playing in front of a neighboring house. But the little girl fled to the rear of a spacious mansion and disappeared into the house. It was the first turn toward the east after you left the Joneses' street, and after that I always stopped to search for her golden head at every opportunity. As I feared that my interest in her would bring ridicule to me, I found myself cherishing my first secret from Aunt Eleanor, who usually accompanied me to the post office. It was no use for her to endeavor to distract me from turning off at this street. Either she turned up this street with me or I would make the detour by myself; there was no other alternative.

Arrived in front of the mansion, I would stand before the dwelling and gaze at the doorway where I had once seen her, with my usual air of vacuous amiability. If the little maid saw me, she was not allowed to accept my proffered acquaintance, and I would reluctantly catercorner across the lot to meet Aunt Eleanor on Shattuck Avenue, keenly aware of my first heartache. After that I went from shop to shop, wherever Aunt Eleanor made her purchases for the day, with perfect deportment and courtly manners.

It was my walk with Aunt Eleanor, however, which introduced me to life — life in its broadest and most romantic sense. Here is the narrative:

One sunny morning in August a young man in fashionable clothing had finished breakfasting in his room at Mrs. Webb's. Mrs. Webb's house was situated on the principal street, and Mrs. Webb was in the habit of letting her front room to students of impeccable respectability.

It was half-past nine, which is a late hour for a young man to breakfast; but this young man appeared to be suffering from no qualms of conscience on the subject. He was rattling gay bangety-bank-a-bangs on his banjo, and glancing occasionally at dozens of golf balls strung along his window-sill to dry in the sun, after a fresh coat of white paint which he had just finished applying.

He had just removed the daily paper from the convenient buttress of the sugar-bowl and taken up his banjo. He was whanging out some lively staccato chords when he became aware that someone had framed himself in the light of his window. I had stopped to gaze into another window to locate the musician, as was my habit! Next moment he heard his newly-painted golf balls clattering to the floor and the wooden tray on which they had reclined was overturned and dropped outside to the sidewalk. I had clumsily upset the affair when I peered into the window!

Looking out to the sidewalk, the student saw a fat boy gathering up his scattered and sticky golf balls, and the window was framing another figure — this time a girl of twenty, blue-clad, and wear-

ing a yellow straw hat caught up on one side by a bow of some stuff that shimmered in the hot morning sun. The student started to his feet. I was standing on the curbstone, smearing the rubber paint on my trousers. I glanced up guiltily, but was too frightened to apologize for my awkwardness.

"I am very sorry," said Aunt Eleanor, "but I am afraid my curious little friend has ruined your snowy golf balls. May I offer his apologies?"

"Certainly!" said the student. "But"—he racked his brains to devise some means of delaying the departure of this radiant, fragrant vision—"the damage is insignificant. I am very glad to make his acquaintance; I think he meant to make a neighborly call. I suppose he is one of my neighbors. And—and"—he blushed—"I hope you are too."

Aunt Eleanor gave him a fascinating smile, and that moment was the beginning of his romance.

"I suppose you are one of the college students," said Aunt Eleanor.

"Yes. I have been at the university only two weeks and I have not met any of my neighbors yet. My name is Huckstep."

"I have been away for several weeks," Aunt Eleanor mentioned.

"I thought you must have been," said the student, rather subtly for him.

"I think you have heard my brother-in-law lecture at the university," continued Aunt Eleanor,

on whom the student's last remark had made a most favorable impression. She mentioned Doctor Jones.

"I have come to look forward to his lectures with a great deal of pleasure," said the golfer, accepting the sticky balls which I was proffering by this time. And he firmly believed that he was speaking the truth concerning Doctor Jones' lectures. "Won't you come in? We have an excellent chaperon," indicating me. "I will come and open the door."

"Well, I certainly ought to go in and remove the paint from Jimmy's hands," admitted Aunt Eleanor thoughtfully.

A moment later the student was at the front door and led his visitor across the little hall into the sitting-room. He had not been absent more than thirty seconds, but during this interval the balls had been upset again, and as they entered, I was apologetically picking them up again and drying my sticky fingers on my trousers.

Aunt Eleanor uttered cries of dismay and apology when I spilled them a third time, but the student would have none of them.

"My fault entirely!" he insisted. "I had no right to make such a mess where the lad could get into it. We have no lectures at the university on Saturdays so I breakfast late and paint my golf-balls for the afternoon game. It is my weekly economy, as the balls take the green stain from the grass and can not readily be found unless they are

a pure white. This precaution saves me quite a sum of money."

"You deserve it," said Aunt Eleanor appreciatively. Her own losses were also augmented by strokes that pulled or sliced the ball off the course and into the weeds. "And how do you like Berkeley?"

"I did not like it at all when I came," said the student, "but during some of the time I have enjoyed myself immensely." He did not say during the past five minutes.


"Were you a druggist before you began to study here?"

"Yes — in Los Angeles. It was tedious work, but a useful experience. I feel rather lost here during my spare time as it takes half a day to go to the links. I get so little exercise. In Los Angeles I had a clerk and I used to slip away for a couple of hours a few times a week and that kept me in good condition. I am inclined," he added ruefully, "to put on flesh."

"Are you a long driver?"

The student shook his head.

"You know about golfing, I see," he said appreciatively. "The worst of golfing," he continued, "is that it takes so much of a man's time to get to the course he has no opportunity to practice mental recreations — chess for instance. Every student ought to be able to play chess; but there isn't a single student I know who can't mate me every game. It's humiliating."



"Do you play billiards at all?" asked Aunt Eleanor.

"I play at it."

"I am sure that my brother-in-law and my sister will be pleased if you come and have a game with us some afternoon."

The enraptured student had already opened his mouth to accept this demure invitation when, as I was rising from the chair which I had preëmpted, I floundered over a waste-basket, thereby falling against a writing-table and upsetting an inkstand and scattering the leaves of a notebook from the table.

As Aunt Eleanor refrained from censuring me for my awkwardness, I assume that her mind was filled with more important subjects after this incident.

I was heavily overworked in my new rôle of chaperon during the next week or two, and any lad less ready to oblige than myself might have felt a little aggrieved at the treatment to which I was subjected.

There was the case of the billiard table which was dusty from disuse, for instance. I had always regarded this as my own playground on rainy days for the rolling of two white balls in pursuit of a red one; but now it was brushed and polished and I was forbidden entrance to the room. The student and Aunt Eleanor performed antics across the table with long slender sticks with curious little buttons on their tips. In addition to driving

the balls with these sticks, they rattled little buttons which were strung on a wire above their heads by moving them to and fro with the sticks. Although their antics kept me from using the table, I watched them interestedly. It did not occur to me to go elsewhere, for my mind moved slowly, and the united persuasion of the players did not bring the suggestion home to me.

I liked the long walks to Strawberry Creek better, for Aunt Eleanor relaxed her supervision of my movements, and I was free to run ahead or lag far behind as I chose.

One hot afternoon, wandering toward the college campus, I encountered the golden-haired little girl whom I had seen but once, yet remembered so persistently when I passed her house off Shattuck Avenue. The girl, who was suffering from extreme panic owing to the approach of a strange, honking object — the first automobile she had ever seen, was bolting straight across the driveway. She failed to look up at me, and I stood petrified to the spot when, after the manner of terrified children, she clutched my hand for protection. To this day, I can remember the thrill that followed the touch of her fingers and the fiery blushes that suffused my face and neck. Seized with panic, I ran back to where I had left Aunt Eleanor and the student, quite unstrung by this incident.

They were sitting side by side on the grass and the student was holding Aunt Eleanor's hand.

I threw myself down on the grass before them,

but neither took the slightest notice of me. They continued to gaze straight before them in a mournful and abstracted fashion. They looked not so much at me as through me. I wondered if they would notice my flushed countenance and excitement. Aunt Eleanor and the student sat on.

"Eighty dollars a month income!" repeated the student. "A long course of study before me and no capital. I can't sell my income property and I have no other money. Dearest, I ought never to have told you."

"Told me what?" inquired Aunt Eleanor softly. It was not that she did not know, but, woman-like, she wanted to hear it.

The student, turning to Aunt Eleanor, repeated the three words she wanted to hear. Aunt Eleanor's reply was a softly whispered repetition of his own words.

"It was bound to come, dearest," she added cheerfully. "If you had not told me, we should have both been miserable."

"What are we going to do about it?" said the student gravely. "It is a question of money."

Then Aunt Eleanor spoke up boldly for the first time.

"Meriwether," she said, "we shall simply have to manage on eighty a month."

But the student shook his head.

"Dearest, you have no idea what it takes to live on," he said. "Eighty a month is less than twenty dollars a week."

"A lot of people live on less than twenty dollars a week," Aunt Eleanor pointed out longingly.

"Yes, I know that. If we could rent a three-room cottage, and I could go about in overalls and a jumper, and you could do the washing, we might be very comfortable. But we have to live up to the standard of our class, and that means linen collars and laundry-bills for me and pretty dresses and collectors for you. I've seen it tried and I know what happened to others!"

"What happened to them?" asked Aunt Eleanor fearfully.

"They all had to come down to debt and disgrace. We will never give a chance to the people who are waiting to take their fling at improvident Americans — not if it breaks our hearts, we won't!"

"You are right, dear," said Aunt Eleanor quietly. "We must wait."

Then the student said the most difficult thing he had said yet:

"I shall go back to Los Angeles."

Aunt Eleanor's lip trembled.

"Why?" she whispered; but she guessed.

"Because if I pass the examinations, it will be years before I can build up a practice."

"You intend to go back to the drug business?"

"Perhaps; but I shall more likely dispose of the drug-store building there — which brings me eighty dollars a month rental — and use the money realized in the sale of it to establish some more

profitable business. So off I go to Los Angeles, my love, to lay the foundation of a little home for you and me — for you and me!”

There was a long silence. Then the pair rose to their feet and smiled on each other very cheerfully, because each knew that the other was sad.

“Shall we announce our engagement?” asked the student.

Aunt Eleanor deliberated and shook her head.

“No,” she said; “better not. It will be our secret.”

“Just between us two, eh?” said Meriwether Huckstep.

“Yes,” agreed Aunt Eleanor.

And the student kissed her very tenderly.

At this moment, Aunt Eleanor noticed a head the color of burnished copper on a clumsy boy, rising from the grass.

“Jimmy will keep our secret, I think,” said Aunt Eleanor, showing the confidence for which I had always been grateful to her. “We have no secrets from Jimmy,” she added.

“Certainly not!” assented the student. “He introduced us.”

So Meriwether Huckstep went away, but he did not remain in Los Angeles. He went instead to another town in the interior where he engaged in business. During these days, which ultimately rolled into years, Mr. Huckstep lost his boyish freshness and his tendency to put on fat. He grew slim and wiry; and though his smile was ready, he seldom laughed.

He never failed, however, to write a cheerful letter to Aunt Eleanor every Sunday morning. He had established a business that was now paying a little profit above the awful expense that had almost engulfed him at first. I continued to reside with the Joneses in Berkeley. Aunt Eleanor was still the recognized beauty of the neighborhood, but she appeared less socially than of old. Girl friends she encouraged, but it was observed that she avoided the friendships of males of eligible age. I was the only one who knew the reason for this. Aunt Eleanor used to read Mr. Huckstep's letters aloud to me every week; sometimes the letter contained a friendly message for me which Aunt Eleanor would explain as we walked together, rain or shine, to post a letter at the post office.

Mr. Huckstep was seen no more in Berkeley. Railroad journeys are costly, and a business man's vacations are rare. Besides, he had no definite purpose in coming. And so life went on for five years. Mr. Huckstep and Aunt Eleanor may have met during that time, for Aunt Eleanor sometimes went visiting. As I was not privileged to accompany her on these occasions, I had no means of ascertaining her movements; but it is possible that she never saw Mr. Huckstep, or she would have told me about it.

Then, quite suddenly came a tremendous change in my life. Doctor Jones fell ill, and after a long convalescence there followed directions for a sea voyage of six months. The doctor decided to take

Mrs. Jones with him and close the house at Berkeley.

"Our plans are complete except for you, Eleanor," said the sick man on the bed, weakly.

"What about Jimmy?" inquired Aunt Eleanor.

The doctor apologetically admitted that he had overlooked me.

"You have always looked after Jimmy," he said by way of excuse.

"I am going to Aunt Margaret," announced Aunt Eleanor.

"But you cannot take Jimmy to Aunt Margaret's house!" cried Mrs. Jones.

"No," said Aunt Eleanor. She ran her fingers through my red curls. "Jimmy is going to visit a friend of ours, aren't you, dear?"

As this arrangement had been communicated to me privately some days before, I nodded silently.

At length the moment arrived for my leaving Berkeley; my childhood was completed — I was now a youth.

One day I expressed my desire to see the little girl with the golden hair whom I had seen entering the spacious mansion near the Joneses, and Aunt Eleanor told me she had been sent to Europe by her father. The house, she told me, was the home of Professor Ladislav Lamsdorff, Professor of Slavic Languages at the university, and the little girl had visited with them. Mr. Romanov, her father, was a widower, and his daughter's name was Feodora. With shame, I recalled the Camembert

cheese which I had thoughtlessly left in the chair which was occupied by Madame Lamsdorff. Perhaps the blue-eyed little girl knew of the incident! No wonder she had declined my proffered friendship!

The next day Aunt Eleanor took me to the Oakland mole and placed me in charge of the negro porter along with a substantial tip. She gave my ticket to the conductor—also my purse. The conductor promised to see that its contents were prudently expended. So I traveled with the conductor as my guardian. Finally, when the train pulled in at my destination, the porter showed me out to the waiting-room where I espied Meriwether Huckstep. With a tremendous rush of recognition, I headed for him without saying another word to the astonished porter. Then I suddenly remembered that the conductor still had my purse, and abruptly left Mr. Huckstep without explaining my errand. I secured my purse and wandered about the entrances to the railroad station for the best part of an hour before I found Mr. Huckstep again. It was then too late for another train out to Mr. Huckstep's home and he decided to run down the coast on a little steamer that sometimes carried passengers as well as freight. Mr. Huckstep was anxious to reach his business and decided to take this little boat. We had lost valuable time because of my forgetfulness. In all this I was the instrument of Fate, as you shall learn.

CHAPTER II

VAUDEVILLE

In the childhood story I have just narrated, only simple events were noticeable — hardly worthy, perhaps, of a man who has lived in many places and become the president of a great mining company — but grant me a few pages' patience, reader, as an introduction to my business life, and what you seek in my book will be displayed before your eager gaze. You will know how a versatile mind is produced, and you will learn that the soil from which my varied experiences were harvested was enriched by the heritage of my parental moral, intellectual and physical characteristics, often bedewed by the sweat of my brow; soon, too, when you come to witness my activities and anxieties, you will be able to appreciate the cost of a prominent position in the mining industry.

On leaving Berkeley, I enjoyed the liberty of being my own master on the train and wandered through the coaches many times before I reached Los Angeles. When I boarded the little steamer with Mr. Huckstep, I was permitted to roam about the vessel, which carried less than a dozen passengers — among them, pretty Feodora. She was with a bespectacled foreigner whom I put down

for Professor Lamsdorff. So Aunt Eleanor was mistaken, I thought; she had not yet started for Europe to join her father. While I was standing at a safe distance and wondering if she would remember the day she grasped my hand — something terrible happened.

The board of inquiry was inclined at the time to blame the captain, but the pilot established the fact that the boilers had gone dry. However, as the engineer who was responsible for the accident was dead, there was nothing more to be said.

About nine o'clock in the evening, as the little steamer was entering San Diego harbor, I left Meriwether Huckstep on the seat in which he was dozing and dreaming of Aunt Eleanor and went forward to indulge in a pleasant lounge about the boat. I was aroused from my reverie by a loud explosion and shot over the rail into the placid waters. Then I rose spluttering, and caught one arm over a white-painted bit of flotsam. Over my shoulder I saw flames coming from the boat, which had been wrecked by the sudden bursting of the boiler. I thought I saw a golden-haired girl lying under the wreckage, pinioned by a heavy beam. Then I kicked out with my feet and paddled with my hands, propelling my piece of wreckage to the edge of the boat, and drew myself up by a rope which was swinging from the deck. I was about to search for the spot where I had seen Feodora when I collided with a wiry body. It was Meriwether Huckstep.

"I was searching for you," observed Mr. Huckstep. "As we are unharmed, we may as well try to make ourselves useful to those who may have been less fortunate."

I dragged him along the deck toward the wreckage piled on either side of a heavy timber. Flames were crackling below.

It was an hour later — at the San Diego pier. A tug had come out, and with a fire-boat extinguished the flames. Then the wreck was towed home.

An automobile belonging to a young doctor stood at the slip, and its owner was receiving one of the injured into the machine. The doctor seemed to have charge of the operations. The injured passengers presented themselves to the ambulance corps.

Only one hesitated. He was a lean and wiry young man, black with soot and oil. His arm was badly burned; and seeing the doctor at last disengaged, he came forward to have it dressed. His clothes were soaked.

The young doctor approached him from the automobile.

"Professor Lamsdorff and the child have been hurried to the hospital," he said. "He asked me to get your name and address. The way you got that little girl out from under those beams was wonderful, and she is unhurt. No one else knew she was there."

The wiry young man smiled.

"Neither did I, sir," he said. "Let me introduce you to the responsible party." He pushed me forward.

The doctor shook hands with me, running his hand through my fiery poll, which was slightly singed.

"Jimmy, my boy," said Meriwether Huckstep, "this gentleman desires to thank you." Then to the doctor: "I'm much obliged to you. My arm feels better now."

He began stiffly to pull on his coat. The doctor, lending a hand, said to him:

"Won't you ride home in my car? I would like to get acquainted with you." He gave me his card.

"I think I should hurry my little lad to bed," replied Mr. Huckstep. "I will look in to see you some other time."

And being in no mind to waste any time playing at hero, he departed forthwith, taking my hand and leading me away with him.

I waved my hand to the doctor with confiding admiration and much interest in his automobile, in which I had hoped to ride home, and determined not to lose his card.

A month later the doctor, leaving his hotel in San Diego, discovered a shock of red hair, slightly singed, which he had no difficulty whatever in recognizing. It was my own red head, bobbing up and down in advance of a young lady of the working class type, who nodded to me as I passed on.

Leaving his machine, the doctor crossed the street to intercept me, but I had disappeared into the hallway of our apartment house. He stared blankly about him. Then the young girl approached and he tapped her on the shoulder.

"A fat little red-headed fellow has just spoken to you," he said politely. "Can you tell me where he lives?"

"He entered the hallway at the corner," said the girl. "Inquire for Mr. Meriwether Huckstep's apartment. Mr. Huckstep is my neighbor. He has a bad arm from an accident. I'll show you the way."

Shortly, upstairs in the first-floor front Meriwether Huckstep, lying in bed, was saying:

"If the professor really insists, sir —"

"He does insist. If that little girl had been maimed or drowned her father would never have gotten over it."

"Well, sir, since you say that, you — well, you could do me a service. Could the professor possibly use his influence to get a college tuition for Jimmy — or send him to a boarding-school — so that we could know that his education is assured and I could afford to marry?" He flushed scarlet. "I — we have been waiting a long time now."

The doctor smiled grimly.

"The professor will be delighted," he said. "The little girl is the only child of a very wealthy Russian gentleman. A few hundreds or even

thousands of dollars are as nothing to him in comparison with the welfare of his daughter."

He shook hands and started for the door.

"Notify your fiancée at once," he said to Mr. Huckstep. "I hope you will invite me to the wedding. Get the boy ready for military school as soon as you like. I will wire the professor immediately."

It was finally decided in solemn family conclave that the military school, as suggested by the doctor, would be best for me. It was a month after the wedding and Professor Lamsdorff's check was made payable to the school for a four-years' course and left with Aunt Eleanor. It was the first time I had ever seen money paid out in such a sum so readily: I was stupefied, astounded!

I regret to say that I did not look forward to my schooling with the degree of pleasure with which such an opportunity should have inspired me. I remembered instead what I had heard Mr. Huckstep tell Aunt Eleanor on the campus at Berkeley. Perhaps it would be years after I left college before I could establish some kind of paying practice. For the first time in my life I faced the future and wished to earn money by my own efforts. I resolved to be a burden to others no longer. As the subject of my future was the topic of daily conversation, I had ample time to reach this conclusion. Aunt Eleanor handed the check and a railroad ticket to me, saying:

"You are old enough to take charge of them now, Jimmy."

"Thank you, Aunt Eleanor!" I said tremulously. "Thank you, Mr. Huckstep." And I went out to do my chores.

A couple of minutes later, having finished my errands with sleight-of-hand dispatch, I lumbered over the board fence in the back yard, crossed the sand lot, and cautiously approached the rear of a shanty. I approached cautiously, because the head of the house was a private watchman at a theatre, and I was afraid of watchmen.

"Come on in," called Dick Dugdale, pausing at a pile of kindling-wood. "The old man ain't home."

"I'm going away — same's you, Dick," I cried exultantly. "Maybe we'll travel on the same train, if the actor takes you with him. Can you go to the matinée this afternoon?"

"I'm afraid the old man won't pass us in this afternoon," remarked Dick gloomily. "I gotta split all this kindlin' and then do some erran's, and I'll be too tired to walk to the theatre after that. We ain't got no carfare."

"Lemme split while you run the errands," I volunteered innocently.

Dick seemed undecided, but did not overdo it. He sat down and rolled a cigarette.

"All right;" he hesitated, "but you better skip out before pop gits back. He's liable to have half

a skish on to-day. If you git through, try to bone your folks for the carfare. I wouldn't ask you, but I gotta work too hard to be walkin' all the way to the theatre."

He lit the wabby cigarette. As he puffed carelessly, I was impressed. I tried to ignore the saffron-hued finger-tips. It was better to think of Dick's cigarette-smoking as a manly accomplishment. Secretly, I envied Dick. Here was a boy who did not fear his father's star and blue uniform, who knew all the fishermen on the forbidden pier, could outsmoke and outswear any boy I had ever known, went to the theatre whenever he liked, went fishing and nutting with the houseboat men as often as he chose, and went tramping for days — with gypsies, so he said — and owned a twenty-two calibre pistol and a collection of cigarette-pictures that even boys whose fathers were rich had to envy.

Indeed, in Dick's society I always felt my own insignificance keenly. In the first place, I lived with the Hucksteps in an elegant apartment. Secondly, I was compelled to wear fashionable clothing, when other boys went about in overalls. The shanty in which Dick lived was surrounded by a truck garden and their household included dogs, cats, rabbits and canary birds and Dick never wore anything but overalls. My one compensation was my red hair, which matched Dick's in fiery luxuriance. But nobody ever called me Redney in the spirit that Dick was called Redney.

For a glorious period, it is true, I had revelled under the caustic wit of the train-crews of Berkeley as Porker, and as Bricktop among the children. Mr. Huckstep sometimes called me Jimmy-boy. But, alas, the boys had heard it once, and with grimaces and much merriment had cried after my retreating figure: "Mamma's-boy, Jimmy-boy! Father's pride and mamma's joy!" I locked the secret in my breast, but all the dare-deviltry had forever been squeezed out of Jimmy-boy. As for James, it sounded too much like a Sunday School hero and reminded me of Mark and Luke and Peter.

My hands were sore and the blisters on them were just reaching an acute stage of pain when a vigorous slap on my back brought me hastily out of my musings. I paused long enough, before dashing home, to assure Dick — for it was he — that I would return shortly with the carfare.

Soon we were at the stage-door, where we happened upon a squad of newsboys — Dick's squalling acquaintances — all begging to be allowed to go in with him past his father, the formidable watchman in the blue uniform.

"We'll give these kids the go-by," whispered Dick cunningly. "The old man won't let a bunch like that get by. I'll go in first and tip off the old man. Then you follow right after me."

When Dick had disposed of the howling newsboys, I passed into the alley that led to the narrow stage-entrance that enabled me to visit the

stage of "the greatest vaudeville offering in America," according to the posters, which featured "Luigi Melloni, Illusionist," as the headliner. It was Melloni who had offered to apprentice Dick Dugdale.

The performance, we found, had already begun. In the wings, ballet girls were crowding up from the dressing-rooms below and pouring out behind the drops at the head of the stairs; animal trainers' cages, gymnastic paraphernalia, tumblers' mattresses were swinging from the beams in the flies above the proscenium; and half the glittering equipment of Luigi Melloni was lowered from the fly galleries at the sides before Dick and I had discovered his whereabouts. The illusionist was fuming and tearing at his shining hair. Then he saw Dick and whisked him away to a dressing-room without any explanation to that astonished lad. When I heard a voice at my side presently, I was astonished to see my friend Dick, gorgeously arrayed in velvet and laces, brilliant ornaments glistering on his dazzling habiliments. Another page, similarly costumed, accompanied Dick to the stage.

"Melloni needs two pages," Dick explained. "One of them deserted. You can watch me do his stunt. I gotta dispose of a watch and chain while the boss strings 'em along out in front."

The girls danced off to scattering applause, and within an incredibly short time the stage was deserted and the curtain down. Then the stage

was decorated to represent a garden filled with natural flowers whose lively colors and fragrant scent reminded me of the Berkeley home of the Joneses. At the rear and in the midst of dense foliage a fountain fell back in thousands of drops into a crystal basin, sparkling like diamonds in the brilliant light. To the left and right, hedges of flowers served as side scenes and laboratory, while a buffet loaded with brilliant apparatus was erected in the center of the mimic garden.

When the curtain rose, a shower of colored confetti fell on the stage and formed a showy carpet. Luigi Melloni then appeared, dressed in a rich Louis XV. costume. Addressing the audience in the grave and solemn tone proper to an illusionist, he said:

“Ladies and gentlemen, before I proceed with the first experiment, I wish to assure you that I have no confederates in the audience. In order to convince you of this, I shall make bold to address myself to His Honor the Mayor, who has favored us with his presence at this performance. Will you kindly lend me your watch and chain which I require?”

And he stepped to the box where the mayor and his party were ensconced. The mayor complied with his request, and the illusionist handed the watch and chain to Dick, who was assisting him in the costume of a page. Melloni resumed his harangue. I was to hear the “boss string ’em along,” to use Dick’s picturesque language.

"It is well known," Melloni continued, "that illusionists possess unlimited powers, for they hold in subjection familiar spirits who blindly obey their masters' orders. Let these spirits, then, prepare to obey me, for I am about to summon them."

Here he majestically traced a circle round him with a wand, and pronounced, in a low voice, certain magic spells. Then he turned to Dick, to take the watch and chain from him, but they had mysteriously disappeared. In vain he asked Dick for them: his only reply was a loud laugh and nodding of his red head, as if he were possessed by one of the spirits the illusionist had summoned.

"Your Honor," Melloni then said to the mayor, "believe me when I say that, far from sharing in this audacious theft, I am forced to confess myself the victim of dishonesty which I did not foresee. But Your Honor may be reassured: we possess means of forcing our servants to their duty. These means are as powerful as they are terrible, and I will offer you an example."

At his signal two stage-hands brought in a long and narrow chest, and a trestle for sawing wood. Dick seemed to be terribly alarmed, but the illusionist coldly ordered the stage-hands to seize him, place him in the chest, the cover of which was immediately nailed down, and lay it across the trestle. Then, taking up a saw, he prepared to cut the chest asunder, when, paralysed with fear, I gave a piercing cry, while the audience murmured at his barbarity.

Melloni paused and glanced ferociously at me, then turned to the audience with a smile.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said to them, "have no fears, I beg, for the culprit; instead of feeling any pain, I assure you he will experience the most delightful sensations."

The chest was at length divided into two parts; he raised them so that each represented a pedestal; he then placed them side by side, and covered them with an enormous wicker cone, over which he threw a large black cloth on which his initials were embroidered in silver. This duty performed, he commenced his little farce of magic circles and bombastic words; when suddenly the deep silence was interrupted by two voices singing beneath the black cloth.

During this time Bengal lights were kindled all around as if by enchantment. At length the fires and the voices having gradually died away, a noise was heard, the cone and the cloth were upset, and — all the spectators applauded; for two pages, exactly alike, appeared on the pedestals, holding a silver salver on which lay the watch and chain. Dick approached the mayor's box, and respectfully offered His Honor the valuable jewelry.

The curtain went down and the illusionist responded to the encore by appearing before the drop. I watched him produce objects of every description from a pocket handkerchief which he borrowed from a spectator. It was like a dream to me, but Dick, having discarded his costume, awak-

ened me to reality. He explained what he called the trick of the two pages. It was simple. Dick disposed of the watch and chain while the illusionist distracted public attention by his incantations. While Dick was being nailed up in the chest, he escaped through an opening corresponding with a trap in the stage; hence Melloni had only to cut through planks. Lastly, by the aid of the cone and the cloth, Dick and the other hired boy, dressed precisely alike, came up through the trap and took their places on the pedestals.

The illusionist was through and the curtain had descended for an intermission. He did not look like an easy task-master. Dick's father summoned him and I gazed curiously about. Melloni's little eyes twinkled wickedly. He threw his trappings about restlessly. Then he spied me.

"If I ever get you inside my chest, I will saw you in two pieces," said the illusionist ferociously, prodding me with an extended thumb. "I have already sawed up five thousand boys!"

This was putting it pretty strong. Credulous as I had always been, I was skeptical for once. Still I fell back from the threatening thumb and rubbed my sides. At the same time I said:

"I'm not afraid; I'd like to be an illusionist too."

I spoke so quietly, with so much poise and deference, that Melloni looked at me curiously.

"Why not, little red-head?"

I did not know why. I had spoken, as was my

habit, like one in a dream. Indeed, at that moment I was dreaming that I was the greatest illusionist in the world, just as I had often dreamed, with wide open eyes, that I was the greatest mining president in the world, the greatest golfer, the greatest racing automobilist.

"Come and see me then, little fatty," said Melloni. "Bring your father with you to the Grand Hotel at seven o'clock to-night if you would like to learn to be a performer; I need an apprentice."

Aunt Eleanor's heart would have jumped with consternation had she heard my conversation with Luigi Melloni that afternoon, but I was impelled by a mysterious impulse that took no account of fear — for I was afraid.

I thanked him eagerly.

"We'll see! We'll see!" said the illusionist, disappearing into the star's dressing-room. I left the theatre abruptly, without another thought of Dick — my memory was treacherous again — and made a bee-line for home, the thought of the illusionist's art dominating my mind. I wished to see Luigi Melloni's performance again that very night, although I was not allowed to leave the house after dark, I knew.

Aunt Eleanor was in the kitchen, superintending preparations for dinner. I asked to be allowed to go to the theatre that night. She knew Mr. Huckstep would oppose my going out at night, but she arose, put on her new spectacles, and said in a peculiarly quiet tone:

"Wait here. I'll go in and tell Mr. Huckstep that I wish to permit you to go."

When we were seated afterwards at the dinner-table, I waited anxiously for his confirmation of her permission.

Somehow, I knew he would permit me to go as I regarded him with a smile on my lips. Half consciously I judged of this optimism in my face by the expression of Mr. Huckstep.

How many times since have I tried this imitative faculty on the part of my listeners? If you are anxious, ill-disposed, or vexed, or should your face bear the stamp of any annoying impression, your listener, straightway imitating the contraction of your features, begins to frown, grows serious, and ill-disposed to be favorable to you. If, however, you appear with a cheerful face, the most sombre brows un wrinkle, and everyone seems to say to you: "How are you, old chap? your manner pleases me; I only want an opportunity to oblige you." Such seemed to be the case with Mr. Huckstep at this moment.

"Jimmy-boy," said Meriwether Huckstep at last, "your Aunt Eleanor has told me that you want to go to the theatre to-night. You are about to enter school where you will receive a sound education, and before you go I wish to allow you to enjoy fully the liberty of a young man instead of keeping you indoors like a small boy. Soon you must enter on the world resolutely, and apply your parts to the profession you wish to embrace. You

are no longer a baby, Jimmy, and I only advise you for your own good. Now I have only this to add; I do not approve of your being out at night. Your aunt has permitted you to go, so I am going to let you do as you please."

With my eyes upon my plate, I swallowed a bite of bread that all but choked me. There seemed to be not room enough for it and the lump in my throat at the same time.

As I knew that in the goodness of their hearts they would never tell me that I had been a heavy responsibility, I was unable to tell them that I had determined to be a burden to them no longer. In vain did Mr. Huckstep try to draw an answer from me by alluding to my future and explaining the advantages of a college education. I could only repeat that I placed implicit confidence in his wisdom and experience, and that, since he left me free to do as I pleased, notwithstanding his objection to my staying out late at the theatre, I would not care to go. This self-denial and passive obedience appeared to touch Aunt Eleanor and she said to him:

"You are hardly generous, Meriwether. Please give him your unqualified permission to go to the performance to-night."

At half past six I hopped over Dick Dugdale's back fence, crunching an apple.

"Going with the illusionist?" I asked briskly.

"The old man won't let me," answered Dick dismally.

"My folks want to send me to that boarding-school," I vouchsafed, regarding Dick narrowly; "but I'd rather go with Melloni."

For the first time in my life, I was crafty. The other boy regarded me shrewdly, while a great, big thought took shape in his mind.

"Geeminy crickets!" muttered Dick Dugdale. "With your red head and mine — we could pass for brothers!"

"And then?" — I asked breathlessly.

"Wait a minute," said Dick. "My old man would stand for anything, so long as he got the best of it. Have you got the address of the doctor you said was going to take you to the school?"

"He said he couldn't go, but that makes no difference," I said. "He wrote to the school and told them to expect me with a check in my hand for a four-year term. Here it is, pinned to his letter to the principal — and my railroad ticket besides. I thought you'd like to see them. The doctor left for Japan last week. I've got ten dollars, too, to buy my meals on the train."

"My old man won't let me go with that actor," said Dick thoughtfully; "maybe he would let me go to a boarding-school, though."

We stared at each other, in riotous imaginings. Then Dick vanished, to return quickly, dragging his uniformed father with him.

"Lessee that tickut," said Dugdale senior.

He did not resent Dick's disrespectful "Now

don't be a piker, pop!" On the contrary Dugdale beamed on his son and said:

"Sometimes I almos' b'lieve y' got brains, muh boy!"

At seven o'clock that evening I accompanied the uniformed Dugdale to the Grand Hotel; he represented me as his son, and signed a written contract agreeing to my apprenticeship to Luigi Melloni, the illusionist.

"Don't write to me until I send you my address. I've quit my job here and don't know yet where I'm going," said Dugdale senior, bidding the illusionist good-bye after the performance that night. It was Melloni's last night in San Diego and we boarded the train for an all-night ride. Henceforth, I was to be an actor!

Already Professor Lamsdorff's presentatious railroad ticket was in the hands of a conductor who addressed its owner as James Oyler. It was Dick Dugdale, masquerading on his way to boarding-school, a wabbly cigarette dangling from his under lip as he matched nickels with the news-agent in the smoker.

Aunt Eleanor waited anxiously until half past eleven that night. Then she went to the hall door and glanced timidly out into the night, wondering why I had not returned from the theatre. She grew fairly pale when she read the note which I had slipped under the door. A parting would have been painful to us all; a son quitting his parents

without hope of ever seeing them again could not have felt more violent grief than I did when I wrote the note to these kind friends who had sacrificed so much for me. I told them that I would try to deserve all their kindnesses by being true to their teachings, and that I would always feel inconsolable at the loss of two friends with whom I would so gladly have passed my life and begged them to keep secret the fact that a poor lad would accept my gift of Professor Lamsdorff's tuition, and that I had become the apprentice of an honorable traveling-man, who would take me around the world.

The moment of our separation had passed and I strived to please Luigi Melloni with a cheerful countenance. He talked of my duties and ended by giving me a short lesson in French, which he said I should learn very readily. As for my impressions of my new guardian, he was a man of about forty-five, above the average height, and his face, though sad and serious at times, displayed a degree of kindness which prepossessed me. He wore his hair quite long, and I noticed that his reason for doing this might have been to conceal a jagged cut across the back of his neck. My curiosity was aroused because of his being an illusionist, and I wondered if he had once been wounded in the course of his performances. I was, therefore, going to inquire, when Melloni, guessing my intention, prevented me.

"I can imagine," he said, "your impatience to

know where we are going and how I received the cut which you have observed; nor will I conceal from you that I am equally willing to have you know the circumstances that led to my receiving my wound. Still, in regard for your health, the responsibility of which I have assumed, I must ask you to be patient until morning; to-morrow we shall have leisure, and I will talk to you in French since your family have already laid so excellent a foundation. In Europe it will be very necessary that you understand French. Hence I will satisfy your curiosity and instruct you at the same time."

As I was quite sleepy, and as I wished to obey all my strange master ordered, I acquiesced. His affectionate manner placed me at my ease and secured me a peaceful sleep, whose good effects I noticed on waking. When the illusionist came to lead me to breakfast, he had not forgotten our conversation and he said:

"You are looking well this morning and as I have nothing else in mind, during our journey to New York, I will tell you something of my affairs; as we shall be together constantly it is better that we become familiar with subjects in common. You will be surprised, I dare say, to learn that my name is Luigi Ghica. Melloni is my professional name and I am a band-master, well-known in Europe. If my French becomes difficult for your clear understanding of what I am about to tell concerning this scar across my neck, pray do not fail to surprise me at once."

Not knowing how to thank this excellent Melloni, I offered him my hand, which he pressed firmly; but — must I confess it? — I was unable to understand much that he told me. In the effusion of my gratitude for his kindly tone, I deeply regret that I am unable to repeat exactly as he spoke, but will give my recollection of the substance of the story Luigi told concerning his brother Demeter's daughter Gabrielle.

Melloni motioned me to a seat opposite him and said:

“My wife is an Austrian and we make our home in Vienna. Last year I took a band of musicians through Italy, but the venture was financially disastrous. I therefore found myself compelled to visit my brother, Demeter Ghica, in the hope of securing financial assistance from him. Soon you will learn why he refused to aid me, and also how I was wounded while stopping with him.”

CHAPTER III

THE BEAUTY AND THE BRIGAND

“Recently I received a letter from my niece in which she furnished such facts as I did not know from my own part in the affair at my brother’s house that evening. This enables me to go back and begin this story where properly it should begin.

“The house of Demeter Ghica was silent in the starry night, like a trim yacht anchored in a sheltered cove. The dwelling stood at the edge of a rough path which led to the village of Fabian at the foot of the mountain to the north of the cottage. This path turned west and ended at the steep flights of steps at the foot of which tiny alleys, connecting with each other and shadowed by tall and ancient buildings, crossed the Stradone, the chief street of Ragusa. Beyond Ragusa, the Adriatic was stretched, a slumbery guardant, yet the enclosing mountains were even more silent against the eastern sky-line. A gully ran by the path toward the west. At its base, and appearing almost within earshot where the streets dwindled to rank grass paths, lay the gardens and groves protected by the walls of Ragusa. I was

madly attached to the beautiful view from my brother's house on the hill.

"The entrance to Demeter's dwelling was indicated by a stone portal with stone seats built into it. The cottage door opened onto a flight of three steps leading down to the terrace. Hydrangeas bloomed in stone vases along the wall of this terrace; the bright silver moonbeams stole through the rhododendrons outside the low window. The house was painted white, with a sloping roof of tiles and windows with green shutters fronting onto a path.

"On this side was the front door which led to the Black-room. This was the commodious room used by all members of the family for their various kinds of work. In the corner toward the courtyard stood the hearth; above it hung a kettle. An iron bar ran across the fire, resting at each end on huge iron rings, mortared into the wall. The walls were plastered with yellow clay, but only to two-thirds of their height; the upper portions and the ceiling were blackened with smoke, and retained a permanent shiny black color which earned the room its name. All round this room, and opening into it, were a number of smaller rooms. A stair led to the upper story, where, except for the beds and a great array of chests, there was no furniture to speak of in the upper rooms. Above the vestibule were fastened little statues — an artistic survival of the household penates of pagan times. The house was decorated

with branches of palm and of lime, juniper flowers and berries.

“At the top of the three steps leading to the terrace, the arched and projecting porch — quaint, dazzling white, painted in rich design around the borders — had niches on either side containing seats. The white-rimmed windows were gaily colored.

“All was gaily colored within — hand painted linen beetlers, painted candlesticks, sticks painted and poked, gaily colored picture-frames and ornaments. And my niece was gaily costumed. I can recall a pretty picture of the embroidered jacket, full elbow-sleeves, and the flowing folds of the garments of Gabrielle Ghica, waiting alone for her father.

“You are no longer a child, my boy, and there are things which you must learn to understand while you are with me. The intense quietness of the room struck now to the soul of Gabrielle a vague sense of foreboding. When the night came, no one could tell what would happen. A rough jar of pottery, one of many in which red roses were growing, fell from the window-sill.

“Her large eyes opened wider, and she laid her hands on her hips and listened as she stood there, hearing only the sweep of the wind. She leaned out of the window and the dry boards on the sill emitted a resounding snap under her weight. Oaks growing among the rocks and prune trees in the orchard made fantastic shadows in the

bright moonlight. Presently the trees bent to the sweep of a rising wind, but one of the shadows was standing still — very still, indeed, and leaning on a sawed-off gun. Gabrielle's face was flushed with fear which almost overmastered her. Strangers did not come to the village often. Travelers from Malada and the Stag Islands, from Ombla and Herzegovina, preferred the piazza overlooking the sea, the Amerling fountain, or the wall under the statue of San Biagio, at Ragusa.

"Perhaps an assassin lurked in the shadows, waiting to slay her father for the wealth he had looted from Roumania, or an officer had come to extradite the intriguer-statesman from his hiding-place. Every evening, either I or her father remained at home with her — I to protect or her father to importune; for her father had planned to marry Gabrielle to Reshad-Hamid, a Turkish diplomatist of the Mussulman brotherhood, and I had sworn to protect and support her waiver, biding the coming of an orthodox suitor. Then her father had threatened to send her, with or without her will — if necessary, gagged and drugged and pinioned — to the sandjak of Novi-Bazar, where she did not wish to go.

"Gabrielle stepped back into the shadow of the black-room, resuming her listening posture. The notes of a concertina, and those from the nearest house in Fabian — a hundred yards distant — wandered faintly through the silence. Gabrielle knew the air, but it caused no rhythmic swaying

of her body in unison with the music of the old game of question and answer, played by the Slav girls in her old home. The concertina almost voiced the words to her; words which they repeated about the queen, three carts of stones, and golden bridges. They would sing on indefinitely, while the girls' faces would glow, their voices ring more passionately, their slow movements grow more lively and more rhythmical, like the mysterious practices of pagan times. Gabrielle had sung the song in Roumania, with turnings and movements of her limbs and measured trippings in choric harmony with her schoolmates. How she had responded to the strains of the folk-song! — clapping her hands and swinging her broad hips, while her healthy body vibrated with a temperament so rich that the joy of living was intense.

“Suddenly Gabrielle moved, took her hands from her hips, then darted out through the door, across the adjoining room, and out onto the terrace. With a little scream she ran back trembling and kneeled on the floor, concealed by the window-seat. She heard a man's foot shifting on the terrace.

“In the midst of her panic, the man she had heard stepped to the window and looked in at her crouching below him. Blue trousers, slit at the ankle to disclose his embroidered leggings, which extended down to curiously laced sandals, were supported at the waist by a scarlet sash which

was stuck full of weapons and impedimenta. Braided stripes ran along the seams at the sides of his cotton trousers. His waistcoat gleamed with two rows of silver buttons. At the throat, his shirt was open and tucked under, displaying a sunburned chest of iron. A small red cap matched the color of his sash and a white lamb's-wool coat was thrown over his shoulders. The man framed in the window was Janos, a brigand known as Kyralyi in Dalmatia. This name, Kyralyi, is usually changed to the English form in America, and is called Carroll. Across the Turkish border he was known as Baron Laszlo, the Hungarian intriguer. Desperate adventures and political intrigues were the occupations with which Janos Kyralyi was at that time confounding the frontier of the sandjak of Novi-Bazar. That the Turks made frequent use of Janos' forte was a tribute to the brigand's courage and ability.

"Janos looked quickly round the room, with a sharp intelligence that took in every detail in a moment. When the object of his visit, crouching under the window-seat, met his roving glance, he peered out across the ravine at the automobile which he had brought up the hill from the end of the railroad, a mile and a half from the gate of Ragusa, and called:

" 'All right, Hassan!'

"He spoke in such a careless tone that the terror of Gabrielle was swallowed in her indignation and wrath at his assurance. Surely her father

must have planned this outrage, she thought, else this giant in peasant garb would be more cautious.

"Janos looked into the room again; a yard away, crouched in the shadow, squatted the object of his trip to Fabian — Gabrielle, my niece. As Gabrielle crouched against the wall she heard the noise of his breathing above her head close to her hair. When she looked up, the man's face was gazing down at her. It was a very masculine face, tanned by wind and sun. He stared down at her with a half-contemptuous humor in his insolent, keen eyes. On a table stood a rough stone jar, filled with cut roses. Leaping to her feet, she seized the jar and hurled it with all her strength in the direction of the flat, ugly, cruel face at the window. Count Laszlo, who lived with the brigands on the borders of Dalmatia, Turkey, Serbia and Montenegro, whose great arms could kill a man with a single blow, caught the jar in his strong hands without an effort. With a broadly satirical grin, he tossed it into the path, folded his brawny arms on the window-sill, and spoke brusquely:

"'You'll need both wraps,' said Janos, pointing to a fringed shawl hanging beside a long sleeveless coat. 'Make ready for a ride across the border. It's a hundred miles and more to Reshad-Hamid's harem, my lady, and my orders are to take care of you — if you behave. It won't be wise to resist or make a noise. You'll be getting

a trussing if you do; and then the Turk will be blaming me for unnecessary cruelty.'

"Then Janos jumped through the window and seized her, gagging her with a big silk handkerchief in an effectual way that belied his recent slight intimation of forbearance.

"Meanwhile Janos' confederate, leaning on his sawed-off gun in the shadows, did not observe my approach. I hid behind a tree and watched. As soon as I saw the automobile I surmised the reason for its presence, and rushing upon him with my knife, succeeded in closing with him before he could aim his gun at me. The weapon was repeatedly discharged as we struggled for possession of it, for I had dropped my knife after stabbing him, in order to have both hands free to ward off his gun. Then Janos arrived and struck me across the neck with his knife, and I knew no more. The wound left the scar which aroused your curiosity."

At this part of Luigi Melloni's story I interrupted him, for I was interested in the fate of Gabrielle.

"Surely," I said, "you will tell me the outcome of Gabrielle's adventure! I am —"

"Certainly; Gabrielle heard the dry crack of a gun shot in the grove from the direction where she had seen the shadow of Hassan, Janos' companion, who was waiting near the automobile. A

steel band was snapped around her ankle, and another, at the end of a loudly rattling chain, was locked to one of the iron rings beside the fire-bar, after which manœuvre Janos plunged through the window and down the path. Gabrielle struggled to her feet and gazed after him, straining her ears. Was it my voice she heard? A dark cloud smothered the dim moonlight, and she stared vainly until it passed. Her first impulse was to remove the handkerchief that gagged her and scream. The cloud passed, and with it the impulse to scream — and she saw three figures silhouetted against the dull sky. The crack of a shot! Again! One black figure fell; steel flashed in the moonlight; a stifled cry; a sickening thud! Silence! Gabrielle swooned.

“Whatever scruples Janos may have possessed as to sacrificing human life, he was able to think quickly and clearly, due to the perpetual turmoil and danger with which his activities were beset. To be found here with the wounded Hassan, who had been seen with him at Ragusa, or with the injured uncle of the girl he had planned to abduct, was a situation which his keen senses at that moment did not care to contemplate. The fact that I had wounded Hassan, and that I had not seen him strike the blow that gave me my quietus, would not exonerate Janos when confronted by the girl he was simultaneously man-handling at the cottage. Janos had not come as a murderer; he had come as the agent of Reshad-Hamid, who

had Demeter Ghica's permission to take his daughter Gabrielle forcibly into Turkey. .

"Beads of perspiration stood out on Janos' forehead; he breathed hard. Snatching what identifying articles he could find in Hassan's pockets, he stumbled and floundered out of the prune orchard. While he was trying to rearrange his thoughts he watched the house. No one appeared. When he leaped through the window again, Gabrielle was still unconscious. He unlocked the steels which bound her to the huge iron ring, returned the key to the cavity in his knife-handle, and screwed the handle tight again. Then he threw my niece across his shoulder and slid down the path. His great strength made it easy to carry her to his motor-car and drive away in the moonlight. When Gabrielle moved, he rendered her unconscious again with a blow of his powerful fist.

"The car rushed on past the monastery of San Giacomo and entered the Valle di Breno along a road against the side of a cliff overhanging the sea. The car sped on through valleys and over ridges until he followed a rivulet to its source, climbing the steep grades until he got his first view of the land-encircled bays of Cattaro at the foot of the Montenegrin mountains, white with snow. Then he slackened his speed, as the narrow loops downward were dangerously steep and the turns short, crossing a strip of the Herzegovinian territory.

✓ "Soon the tiled roofs of houses beneath date-palms and cypresses appeared as he sped along past the end of the railway at Zelenika and took the road close to the sea. Presently the machine was winding through low growths of live-oaks, bay and laurel, or along passages roughly hewn from stone, into Meljine. It was six miles to the ferry at Kamenari, then about eight to Cattaro, and from there, he thought, it was about thirty miles to Cetinje.

"At Kamenari he had some difficulty in getting the car aboard the ferry as the gang-way was hardly wide enough, but the actual sailing across the bit of water took only eight minutes. When disembarking at Lepetane on the farther shore, no power was applied to the machine; the sailors rolled it off the barge, Janos keeping the wheel straight from the seat in the car. Gabrielle appeared to be sleeping on his shoulder when the car sped along a fine road to Cattaro. The flag upon the castle's tower was snapping in the breeze as Janos went spinning across the river and into the highway leading to Montenegro, just outside the town of Cattaro. As he turned sharply to the right to ascend the pass, a clear road for the ascent presented itself. Janos procured water at a wayside trough and hurried on into the sixty-eight loops around the mountains, crossing the Austrian line within less than an hour. The next stop was made for water at a road-maker's house. The road had grown distinctly rough, and the

landscape barren save for small patches of young oaks against gray, bleak hillsides, beyond which extended the snowy peaks of Lovcen, rising into the clouds. He descended rapidly by sharp and narrow windings until in the distance he saw Scutari, the home of Reshad-Hamid. After more windings and twists and short turns down, a treeless highway led straight into Cetinje.

"That moonlit night Janos Kyralyi motored from Ragusa to Cetinje. Had it not been for his speedy automobile, the Dalmatian authorities would have run the fleeing giant to his lair. This fact kept them off his trail, although I recovered strength to drag myself to the nearest house and give the alarm. But no one knew, not even the wounded Hassan, whether Janos had left Ragusa by boat, or taken to the mountains.

"Janos wore a scowling countenance; this adventure was not much to his liking. Reshad-Hamid had not counselled murder, and might expose him to the authorities on information from the girl. She was a menace, he thought. And in this second he promised himself he would allow the girl to feel the lash of his ire, should she accuse him.

"Despite the fact that royalty alone owns automobiles in Montenegro, Janos drove Reshad-Hamid's automobile through the streets of Cetinje to the door of a red-roofed dwelling — the home of a former confederate in numerous shady ad-

ventures. It was a bachelor's home and his confederate volunteered to vacate the premises for a week, thus making Kyralyi's extremity his own opportunity to sail up the coast on long-deferred business. His friend was attired in all the bravery of scarlet and blue, with gold embroidery and a hanging cloak. His round, scarlet cap was bound with black, with gold initials within a rainbow. At the door, he invited Janos to make the house his own and sauntered away into the night. Soon Janos was alone and unobserved. He gave thanks to such deities as he affected and locked all the doors. On his rounds he found food and brandy. It was a modern stuccoed building, two stories in height. The ground floor was used as a store-room and kitchen, the upper one contained two bedrooms. My dazed, exhausted niece, dressed in a flowing skirt of soft wool, lay moaning in one of the upper rooms. She turned her puzzled eyes toward Janos when he entered with food and brandy. They were dusky, velvety eyes, wonderful dark eyes — forever in play.

"Janos Kyralyi noticed those eyes, as he thought over the incidents of the night now in the cold light of reason. With the necessity of making no mistake as to his main chance, the impression came over him that, far from being in a bad plight, he had been overlooking the possibilities with the girl as a factor. Why not marry her himself?"

Luigi Melloni was so excited by these reminiscences that he abruptly broke off at this point. We reached our next stop and the illusionist filled an engagement of a week, at the end of which time I was entirely satisfactory to him in my rôle of page. I was also able to assist him by coaching an extra boy, who in a wig and costume was my companion on the pedestals.

The weeks passed on, but Luigi Melloni did not offer to resume his story anent Gabrielle Ghica. At length we reached New York — the end of his engagements, and we sailed at once for Europe. The next day Melloni continued his narration without awaiting any request from me:

“When Janos entered the room, Gabrielle met his glance and sank back again, but his hand arrested her. His wiry fingers grasped her wrist; she felt herself seized and dragged to her feet, helpless in his strong grasp.

“‘This bottle contains very good brandy, I believe,’ said Janos, with an audacious but not unpleasantly impudent look in his eye. ‘I hope you have not suffered a great deal from my rough handling,’ he went on. ‘Another shaking will do you good, presently; it will bring on a reaction from the brandy and stimulate your circulation.’

“Gabrielle rose and adjusted her brocaded apron and disentangled the string of gold filigree beads until they fell low on her bosom.

“‘What do you intend to do with me?’ she in-

quired coldly, continuing to arrange her rings, brooches and filigree medals with which she was decked.

"He ignored her question, poured off a full glass of the fiery liquor and drained the glass before pouring a second one which he intended for her.

"Certain from his manner that he would force her to drink it against her will, should she decline it, Gabrielle took the glass and toyed with it while he answered:

" 'You have very little to fear from me.' He paused and regarded her curiously. 'My business is not to my liking,' he went on, rising and adjusting the rich sash he wore over his wool coat, 'not because it is perilous, but because I am tired of the country. Now I will speak of what concerns you!'

"He stood towering above her, though she was of good height. He tilted her head back and compelled her attention by lifting her chin upward. She dashed his hand away with an angry sweep of her arm.

" 'Brute!' she hissed, her face flaming.

" 'Your father is a greater brute,' he flung back, 'else you would not be here with me.'

"He paced the room, and she noticed his splendid proportions, but when he turned his mocking countenance toward her again, she thought of the long revolvers thrust carelessly through his broad sash. She wondered if a stroke of good fortune

might not enable her to snatch one of them. Janos followed her eyes and guessed her thought. He removed the cartridges as he spoke:

"‘After this experience,’ he said, ‘you cannot return to your father because, even should you escape from me — which is unlikely — you would always have the fear of a repetition of the episode —’

"He stopped; Gabrielle had interrupted him with a weary motion of her hand.

"‘Since you insist upon talking to me,’ she said, frowning, ‘please tell me of my Uncle Luigi. I saw him in the trees. I thought I heard his voice while I was chained to the wall by those terrible manacles.’

"Again he ignored her questioning, pouring a second glass of brandy, which he drained. He glanced at her glass, paused as if to say something, thought better of it, and sat down without comment.

"Gabrielle set aside the brandy which Janos had forced into her hand, stepped forward suddenly and struck him a stinging slap across the face. He made no attempt to avoid the blow but nodded approvingly.

"‘You call yourself a man!’ she said in a low voice. ‘What of my uncle?’ she questioned, her voice rising as Janos scrutinized the brandy-glass and tormented her with an impudent smile. She stamped her foot and struck him another stinging blow. It brought no reaction from him.

‘Answer me,’ she screamed, her anger mastering her.

“‘My dear young lady, I have never seen your uncle,’ he lied. ‘I shall not find it necessary to force that brandy on you,’ he added. ‘Your strength has returned without the aid of the liquor. Anger seems to be an efficient stimulant — in your case.’

“He regarded her with a trace of apprehension when she produced a fluted handkerchief and dashed it across her eyes. But she did not weep.

“‘Who were those men in the orchard?’ she demanded.

“‘Please calm yourself,’ he urged. ‘I saw no men. When I stuffed that handkerchief into your mouth, you obligingly fainted. Then your father arrived. Although it seemed a trifle barbarous to carry you away thus, your father thought it would be the same another time, and ordered me to bring you to Reshad-Hamid.’

“He watched her narrowly as he pronounced these fictions, but she, poor girl, indicated no incredulity. Indeed, her father had given her cause to believe him capable of abandoning her in such a manner, for he had often threatened to do so. It was for this reason I prolonged my stay in the province of Dalmatia, offering to take her to my wife in Vienna; but her father would not permit her to visit Madame Melloni. I then wrote to my sister, Madame Lamsdorff, advising her of Gabrielle’s predicament. Madame Lamsdorff was

preparing to visit America with her husband, who was to become Professor of Slavic Language at the University of California. My sister begged Demeter to permit Gabrielle to accompany them, but he declined the invitation."

I was so startled by his reference to Professor Lamsdorff that I almost betrayed my identity by exclaiming that I had seen the Lamsdorffs at my Berkeley home years ago on the occasion of the Professor's first appointment as Professor of Slavic Languages there. But I recovered myself in time to conceal my excitement, although I lost the thread of his narration of Gabrielle's adventure with Janos. While I was wondering if, during the progress of his story, he would mention the beautiful, blue-eyed girl whose father had paid for a course of study for the rescuer of his golden-haired daughter, Melloni was continuing:

"Janos rose and held Gabrielle by the shoulders. When she struggled to free herself, he held her helpless. Suddenly she realized that she no longer feared him.

"'You had a rough ride and many bruises,' he was saying, 'but they were unavoidable. Nothing else happened except in your delirium.' His manner became less insolent. 'Up to now,' he went on, 'my course has been impersonal — and for pay; but I am only human and you are beautiful. I shall not give you up to Reshad-Hamid because — I want you too much myself!'

THE BEAUTY AND THE BRIGAND 73

"She turned her great orbs up to him; faintly, he saw her smile.

"‘You are a brute,’ she said; ‘but perhaps I like you a little better than I did at first.’ She put his arm from her shoulder and retreated a little.

"The pressure of her hand upon his arm affected him oddly; he released her and dropped into a chair across the room.

"‘I have told you I am tired of the life,’ he said, knitting his brows. ‘I want to go to Italy; and I will take you with me as my honored wife — if you will go willingly, rather than enter the harem of the Turk whom you have never seen.’ An ugly gleam appeared in his eyes for a moment and he added: ‘If my offer does not appeal, I shall hold you captive until you change your mind!’

"Gabrielle suppressed her excitement and strove to speak calmly.

"‘Will you send for a priest — now — before the hour is ended?’

"‘Yes,’ he assured her, ‘if that is your wish.’

"She looked into his twinkling eyes and reddened slightly. Then she stuck out her under lip for a moment before she said:

"‘I wish to marry you — as the lesser evil!’

"For several seconds the tick-tock of the ponderous clock was the only sound in the house.

"‘I suppose,’ said the big fellow finally, ‘that

you hope to betray me to the priest with the story of your abduction, eh? Is that your plan?’

“He studied Gabrielle closely and awaited her reply.

“‘No, no!’ she protested quickly.

“He waited for her to assure him further.

“‘I have never told a lie in my life—’ began the girl.

“‘You do not even know my name,’ he interrupted. ‘I am called Baron Laszlo, not because I am entitled to that rank, but because my mother was the daughter of the last Baron Laszlo. Stephen Kyralyi, at the age of twenty, married her; but he deserted her and broke my mother’s heart. He is still a young man, although I am twenty-one. Some day I may meet him and then! — one of us must die!’ The veins stood out on his forehead as he boomed out the words.

“His vehemence caused Gabrielle to temporarily forget their relations.

“‘You are not to blame for your father’s faithlessness!’ she cried, almost sharing his anger. ‘Society should drive your father from it unless he makes reparation.’

“‘Society,’ he roared. ‘What has society done for me?’

“The caustic tones spurred Gabrielle to a semblance of sympathy.

“‘Why should you grieve over what you cannot change?’ she said, touching his great shoulder lightly with her hand. ‘A great, powerful man

— in the fresh prime of youth, as you are — may go to some new country and — with the woman he loves — make a new name and a happy home.’

“Again the ugly gleam of resentment and rebellion appeared in his countenance.

“‘Love!’ he hissed. ‘What man would give his daughter to me — knowing my history? And what man would give his consent without knowing?’

“Gabrielle Ghica had never before been outside the protection of her relatives, but she felt no fear of this man at the moment. She took his enormous hand in both her own.

“‘You know who I am,’ she said softly. ‘I will keep my word and marry you. I know you won’t take me out of this house. You mistrust me too much to risk that; but I swear that I will make no complaint to the priest if you will send for one.’

“She looked up at him, saw tears gathering in his eyes, and she marvelled.

“‘I will keep my word and marry you,’ she repeated insistently. ‘If I should jeopardize your safety by telling the priest what you have done, you would have scant respect for his sacred calling. You might even kill him if it seemed expedient. I know that you are a brigand — yet I will marry you,’ she concluded, more insistently.

“‘For protection — I suppose!’

“‘I expect some consideration — yes.’ Gabrielle hesitated.

“‘From me — an outlaw?’

“Something about the questioner suggested that he was not hopelessly bad.

“‘I do not fear you,’ she answered truthfully. She felt his hand quiver under her touch and she was silent for a moment. Then she looked up at him.

“‘We can go to Italy — as you suggested,’ she began. ‘Once a great musical conductor heard my voice and offered to present me in La Scala, the famous opera house at Milan. I was eighteen, but I know several operas in many languages. I was taught by my uncle, Luigi Melloni; but my father would not hear of my becoming a public singer. If you will take me to Italy, we can make money honestly. I will sing at the opera house and you will find honest work. Won’t you take me to Italy?’ she finished, her flushed face indicating her eagerness.

“He took her flaming cheeks between his huge palms and gazed into her luminous eyes.

“‘Life and love! — for Janos Kyralyi!’ he muttered hoarsely.

“‘With your protection I can go on the stage,’ she went on rapidly. ‘To become a great contralto is the dream of my life. Can’t you understand that I am wild to go away to Italy? — And that there is not even the remotest possibility of treachery from me?’

“Again she had his hand — as large as both her own.

THE BEAUTY AND THE BRIGAND 77

“ ‘Besides,’ she said shyly, ‘you are my first and only suitor, and I like you a little already.’

“ ‘Well, you are a find!’ Janos exclaimed triumphantly. ‘Lord! You are positively ravishing, girl. I’m going to make every effort to deserve you.’

“ She crossed and took up a position across the table.

“ ‘Why don’t you call me Gabrielle?’ she said.

“ He rose and came slowly toward her, took her in his arms — she knew resistance was useless — and was about to kiss her, but she stopped him.

“ ‘Wait, Janos,’ she pleaded. ‘Don’t forget about the priest! You must send for him at once — tonight! Now!’

“ He pushed her away roughly.

“ ‘And allow you to escape! — Don’t you trust me?’

“ Again she saw the curious, almost ugly, look of obstinacy which she had already noticed return to his countenance. He paced the room again.

“ She followed him across the room and rested one arm against his chest, her hand on his shoulder.

“ ‘It is not that, but —’ Tears hung in her eyes and she paused. ‘Won’t you wait, Janos?’ she continued. ‘I will kiss you — willingly — after the priest is gone.’

“ She stood gazing pathetically like an innocent child, regarding her jailer with adjuratory

mien. The clock seemed to tick louder each second.

"Janos dropped into a chair again, buried his face in his brawny arms, and gave a great suspiration.

"'Willingly!' Janos echoed gutturally the word she had stressed. 'I prefer that you should kiss me — willingly.'

"Her eyes gleamed, and her voice vibrated with a strength of feeling that she herself scarcely understood.

"'The priest, then!' she cried. 'Go for him at once!'

"At this moment the sharp ring of a bell from somewhere off in the hall broke on the stillness of the room.

"'What was that?' cried the startled Gabrielle.

"Janos did not reply, but rose quickly, slipped the cartridges back into the cylinder of his pistol, drew a pocket-lamp from his sash, switched off the dim light from the single electric bulb that had been burning in the room, and without another look at his prisoner he went out. The snapping of the lock on the outside left Gabrielle a prey to fresh terrors.

"Without using his battery-lamp, Janos stole down the flimsily constructed stairway to the front door, where the moonlight was making shadows on the glass panel of the door. He shifted the curtain to command a view of the porch and saw his confederate. Throwing back the bar, he ad-

mitted him. Together they entered the front room, which was either the parlor or the music-room, as red velvet curtains and a grand piano imparted an air of elegance to the simple desk and chairs and table.

"Before the desk, lying on the floor, his friend found the document for which he had returned to the house. In the dim light he had switched on, Janos saw a Servian postmark on the envelope which contained the document. He pointed to the postmark and winked his eye knowingly; his confederate meaningly returned the wink.

"His eyes were small and coal black; they twinkled when Janos confided to him that he had stolen Reshad-Hamid's quarry — the beautiful daughter of Demeter Ghica. He agreed to cooperate, promising to return with a priest forthwith. A young man he was, with a hawk-like nose and a bluish scar across his chin.

" 'I hope I put you to no inconvenience,' Janos remarked.

" 'Should anything go wrong,' returned the other, 'the errand will explain my being abroad at this time of the night.'

" 'What's a-foot?' Janos murmured.

" 'Memorials inciting the people against the government!'

"Janos' face lighted with interest for a moment. Here was a splendid field for desperate adventure! Then he remembered the girl and his intended journey to Italy. It would all end in

mere prattle, anyway, he thought,— a mass meeting and speeches, followed by a raid by the soldiery.

“‘I am not a talker, but a fighter,’ he said finally. ‘The business is not in my line.’

“‘There will be fighting,’ said the other quickly. ‘The malcontents have already made raids on government territory, and rifles and bombs have been collected on the frontier. Some of the bombs were sent to me,’ he added significantly. ‘I came back to warn you to be careful to avoid their hiding-place.’

“Janos caught his meaning. Then:

“‘They are still in your custody?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘In this house?’

“‘Under the house!’ his friend corrected.

“‘I shall vacate your house at once,’ said Janos dryly. ‘Do you believe you can rouse a priest?’

“‘Father Dabor, your guardian, lives but a short distance from here. If your lady tries to trick you it will not matter, as the old humbug will not betray you.’

“‘I wonder who the old man was before he became a priest,’ said Janos.

“‘You know what Montenegro is,’ returned his confederate. ‘The whole country is a huge natural fortress. Its geography has prevented its conquest by the Turks, and, by the same token, Austria does not own it.’

THE BEAUTY AND THE BRIGAND 81

“‘What difference does that make to the old priest?’ Janos cut in sagely.

“His companion shrugged his shoulders.

“‘Who knows?’ he said. ‘Montenegro for years has been the refuge of many of the Slav nobility. Observe the patrician character of its people today. It is remarkable! Maybe the old man is an exiled nobleman. He speaks several languages fluently, but no one knows his history.’

“Janos pondered.

“‘Have you heard my history?’ he asked presently.

“‘Yes.’

“‘Father Dabor told me of my parentage when I left his school,’ he said. ‘Baron Laszlo was my grandfather.’

“‘I know the story,’ his friend replied, moving toward the door. ‘I must not forget that your bride is waiting,’ he added. ‘When I return, the priest will be at your service.’

“As his friend passed out of the house, Janos was saying:

“‘The situation was a problem before you returned.’

“The other nodded appreciatively.

“‘You are putting yourself to considerable inconvenience,’ Janos finished.

“His companion smiled. The little beady eyes twinkled.

“‘Cupid’s business is always a pleasure,’ he re-

sponded, raising his hand to deprecate his services.

"His thin-lipped mouth was topped by a short mustache; his smile displayed a row of splendid teeth.

"Janos watched him descend the stone stairway and swing off into the shadows — jaw stuck out, his black eyes sparkling. Then he closed and barred the door again. Flashes from his pocket-lamp lighted the way to the floor above. He switched on an electric bulb in the upper hall, and approached the door which opened into the room in which he had left Gabrielle Ghica, where he paused. After again removing the cartridges from his pistol, he tried his key and the door opened under his hand and closed again behind Janos Kyralyi, the grandson of Baron Laszlo."

Luigi Melloni paused in his narrative, for he saw that I wished to speak.

"May I ask," I began, "if Janos' father ever visited America? I remember a Mr. Stephen Carroll who used to play golf in San Francisco when I was a very small caddie. You informed me that Kyralyi is pronounced Carroll in English."

It was some time before Melloni decided upon a reply. Observing his reticence, I hastily recalled him to his narrative, which I had interrupted.

"I only wished to bring the name to your attention," I said apologetically. "Please do not

break into the story of Gabrielle and Janos now. Did she marry him? ”

Melloni smiled, and soon his imagination was at work again. After holding his hand over his eyes for some time, as if trying to picture the priest's house, he continued:

“ ‘ Father! — Oh, Father! — wake up there, Father! ’ urged an insistent voice at the small bedroom window of the priest's dwelling.

“ Father Dabor lived in a stone house perched among the olive orchards. Steep paths of steps straight down the hill led to other streets and houses on the level below.

“ There was a sound of rapping on his window. Out of a sound slumber, Father Dabor was thus awakened. He rubbed his eyes and tumbled out of bed. At his window was the young diplomat who had just left Janos Kyralyi.

“ ‘ Come, Father Dabor, ’ cried the diplomatic agent, ‘ and marry Janos Kyralyi, or Baron Laszlo, or both of them, to the young lady who is waiting for you at my house — and don't lose a moment about it! ’

The rapping on the window became more insistent.

“ ‘ Yes, yes! Coming! ’ said Father Dabor sleepily. ‘ Nothing is wrong at your place? ’

“ ‘ The bride is waiting there, ’ said the young man at the window, pointing down the steep paths

of steps, 'and she's rather more than anxious to see you. They came in from the border riding like mad from her father, who promised her to a Moslem on the Lake of Scutari. I offered them my hospitality and started for your house at once. Be quick, Father Dabor! The girl fainted twice during the journey. Janos reached Cetinje in time to save her from the harem, maybe; but you are the one to decide that!'

"'Harem? Harem?' said Father Dabor, rubbing his eyes. He was not fully awake. 'Where is the harem?'

"'Reshad-Hamid's seraglio at Scutari,' said the young man, waving his hand toward the snow-capped Albanian Alps.

"Before that evening, Gabrielle had lived a monotonous but peaceful life with her father, where I was visiting them. Nothing had ever occurred to test her courage during her girlhood. She was unprepared for the excitement of such an adventure, yet she was brave enough to risk a life with this outlaw stranger rather than bow to her father's will and marry a Turk.

"At first she had feared Janos — that was all; but when he spoke of himself and his father's desertion of his mother, and my niece began to see Janos as a romantic and pathetic figure, her feeling changed. She was very sorry for him; and in many women the quality of sympathy is so strong that it overlaps the beginning of love. The more feminine a woman is, the more she likes to mother

a man; and it is a singular fact that the strong feeling known as the mother instinct in woman is at once her greatest beauty and her greatest menace.

"When I received Gabrielle's letter, advising me of all the facts, I divined the situation and rightly analysed the situation. And with this thought, I grieved for my niece, for I could not but recall her loveliness — nor yet the fragrance of her! They went to Italy, and as I was leaving Ragusa, I went by way of Cetinje.

"Slowly thinking of Gabrielle and the man she had just married, I walked along the path and climbed the steps up the steep hill to the house of Father Dabor, perched among the olive orchards.

"Far beyond ordinary perceptions was the priest endowed with an insight into the human heart, and he expressed the belief that Janos — judging from his reverential manner when he married Gabrielle — had appealed to her sympathy. The fear that Janos lacked the conscience or the self-restraint to refrain from playing upon this beautiful weakness in Gabrielle was, perhaps, his greatest sorrow as he returned with me to the station, pausing for breath at intervals and gathering the pink roses that hung over the stone walls in profusion. He feared that her fine sensibilities would soon become dulled and deadened by a life with the reckless Janos. I received a full account of the marriage as I have related it to you, and

then left Father Dabor, who gave a tremendous aspiration, musing while he rested in the shadow of a huge mulberry tree.

"Now I will explain my object in telling you something of my niece. My trip through America was not a satisfactory one financially. A short time ago I received a letter from Gabrielle, saying that she had successfully appeared in public as a contralto, and begging me to join forces with her and put on a musical act. As you now know, I am a musician. I intend to work up a performance that will include songs by Gabrielle, and you and I will continue the illusions. This will strengthen my act and at the same time enable Gabrielle to get some experience before the public.

"I have just heard from Gabrielle again. When Janos' mother died, Father Dabor received her heirlooms, which he delivered to Janos when he left the care of the priest. There were twenty wonderful opals, set in stickpins, rings and cuff-links and surrounded by diamonds; a Patek-Philippe watch with a crest in tiny diamonds, and a gold cigarette-case with a monogram in rubies. Soon these were pawned in Milan; and Gabrielle's rings — diamonds, emeralds and sapphires — as well as necklaces of oriental pearls were pledged for the money which Janos lost at gaming in Italy.

"Until word came that my brother Demeter had died a bankrupt, thus leaving nothing to my niece, Janos had been kind to Gabrielle. It was only recently that Janos Kyrallyi engaged in a

THE BEAUTY AND THE BRIGAND 87

desperate fight one night which resulted in the death of his antagonist. Janos escaped from Italy, deserting Gabrielle.

“When we reach Vienna, Gabrielle will join us; and it is my wish that you refrain from referring to her past, or asking any questions that would prompt her to speak of it. That is my object in telling you her story, my dear boy.”

I saw by Melloni's last sentences and the manner in which he tried to shorten his narrative that he not only desired to read a book which he carried, but also to recover from the painful emotions these melancholy reminiscences had evoked. A few words, too, Melloni had dropped informed me that he was in a pecuniary dilemma; hence, I left him under the pretense of letting him read, and begged him to be assured that I would be most diligent in my studies and endeavor to become a comfort rather than a care to him during my apprenticeship.

CHAPTER IV

MY DOUBLE

After her presentation in La Scala, Gabrielle sang in the principal cities of Italy, finally reaching Vienna, where we were offering the trick of the two pages. Melloni found the audiences enthusiastic, and during the four years that followed my master and his niece prospered. But many times in the dressing-room the tears marred Gabrielle's make-up. The poor girl often left raw splashes of red where the color should have been softly blended; and tears made her rouge-paw useless. When she looked in her mirror she thought of Kyralyi's black eyes instead of her own which were as black.

It is impossible for me to describe to you our itinerary during four years; suffice it to say, I traversed the whole of Europe, the master stopping, of preference, in the chief cities. For a long time his popularity was at its zenith, but suddenly he was destined to experience the constancy of Fortune.

One fine day I found his star beginning to pale; the public did not applaud our illusions. I no longer heard the bravos that used to greet my ap-

pearance on the pedestal, and the spectators appeared to me indifferent. How was this? What could be the cause of this capricious change? Our repertoire was still the same; Melloni had introduced no change; the illusions he submitted to the public were the same which had been so warmly accepted. I felt, too, that Melloni had lost none of his vigor, skill, or spirit. My only consolation was the signal success of my master's niece, although her songs had been separated from our failing act. When this fact struck Melloni, he realized the truth. Precisely because he made no change, the public had begun to grow indifferent; while civilization had been progressing, he remained stationary — hence he was going down.

The illusions no longer possessing the charm of novelty, my master determined to return to his musical labors. Having saved a considerable sum of money, he quit the theatres and set about organizing a great band of musicians. It was settled that I was to return to my own country with the liberal allowance for my services which Luigi Melloni paid me. I might have become a capable musician by remaining with Gabrielle and her uncle, but I was mortally tired of the night life I was leading as a performer, and I felt the need of changing my ground and seeking fresh excitement. Besides, I began to feel a degree of nostalgia, and as we had been moving from place to place so constantly, it had been impossible to keep any mail following me; hence I had received no an-

swers to my letters to Aunt Eleanor and Mr. Huckstep. Once I wrote to Dick Dugdale, but if he replied, I never received the letter.

It was my intention to proceed to San Francisco, but on my arrival at New York I read in the papers the dramatic critic's review of the performances of an illusionist by the name of Tippoo. The writer made much of the Hindoo name of the performer because of his ridiculous shock of red hair. The article described his manner of producing the two pages, which was almost Meloni's. Which of the two was the plagiarist? I have reason to know it was Tippoo. At any rate, having no desire to attempt these tricks which I had learned so thoroughly during my stay in Europe, I evacuated the city without visiting Tippoo's performance.

How my heart beat when I returned to my native city of San Francisco! I felt as if I had been absent an age, and yet it was only four years since I left America. The tears stood in my eyes as I embraced my Aunt Eleanor and Mr. Huckstep. I was stifled with emotion. I have since made long journeys in foreign countries and have always returned to my family safely but never, I can declare, have I been so profoundly affected as on this occasion. Perhaps it is the same with this impression as with so many others,—habit at last renders it flat.

I found Mr. Huckstep very quiet on my account, for I had employed a trick to avoid say-

ing farewell to them. Still I must furnish some reason for my return, and I hesitated about describing my stay with Melloni. At length, however, urged by that desire, common to all travellers, to narrate their travelling impressions, I gave an account of my adventures, even to the minutest details of the deception of Dick Dugdale's father, the watchman at the San Diego theatre.

It may be thought, perhaps, that I have dwelt too long on the circumstances that followed my departure; but I was compelled to do so, for the experience I acquired from Melloni, his story of Janos and Gabrielle, and our conversations, had a considerable influence on my future life.

Aunt Eleanor was the mistress of a splendid mansion, since Meriwether Huckstep's business had prospered. The trip abroad had failed to benefit Dr. Jones, her brother-in-law, and he had declined rapidly. His widow had survived him only a year. We talked of other people whom I remembered, but they had all passed out of the recollection of the Hucksteps. There was one, however, that was a pleasant recollection of New York, where Aunt Eleanor had spent some time with her husband. As I was abroad when these events occurred, the direct conduct of the narrative here passes out of my hands.

Mrs. Dugdale was a most worthy, decent, hard-working widow, who lived in two little rooms and


earned a humble livelihood by sewing. She also sewed cheaper than any other dressmaker and everybody liked her; and if her son Dick was a bit wild and shiftless, she was not to blame for that. And then he had such beautiful red hair that one knew that such beauty could not but cover much good in him. Who had not noticed Dick Dugdale's fiery poll and the way he displayed the curls when he lifted his cap?

Aunt Eleanor was speaking to her husband. She needed a dressmaker and Mrs. Dugdale could act as maid as well. What if her son Dick had no previous experience? He would develop into a splendid valet after he learned to shave Mr. Huckstep. Some one could teach him to press Mr. Huckstep's trousers, and perhaps he would become a prosperous tailor some day! Did Meriwether Huckstep want to see a boy like that grow up without an opportunity — a boy who so much resembled their departed Jimmy?

What could Meriwether Huckstep, a prominent citizen and the principal stockholder in the bank, do — except surrender to his wife's wishes? So he said:

"Have it your own way, then, my dear. Hire Mrs. Dugdale and her son if you want them."

The employment of the Dugdales proceeded without a hitch, and on the following day they were both installed as servants in the home of the Hucksteps. Mrs. Dugdale was a gray-haired little woman whose husband had been a drunkard.



When he died of acute alcoholism, she was left penniless.

Mr. Huckstep succeeded in placing Mrs. Dugdale at her ease during their first interview, but Dick — soaped and brushed into a state of speechless confusion, tried his best to be neither seen nor heard. He quaked if Mr. Huckstep looked at him. He hung on his mother's eye, and visibly trembled when he was spoken to. She showed considerable tact and admirable composure.

Mr. Huckstep gave the interview an interesting turn by asking Mrs. Dugdale whether she intended making a barber or a tailor of Dick. At this she sighed and said that she had always hoped that he would be a professional man, but as he once ran away from school where he was being prepared, she had thought he might perhaps be an electrician instead. Then she wondered if Mr. Huckstep could tell her how to go about it, and whether it was easy for a bright boy to get into the big electric plants. That she should cherish such a dream for this uncouth, uneducated youth, whose only outside occupation appeared to be caddie-mastering at the golf links during the season and carrying a supernumerary's spear at the theatre during the remainder of the year, struck Mr. Huckstep as typical of an ambitious mother's folly.

Mr. Huckstep did not encourage her and turned the conversation by asking Dick what he would like to become.

"An opera-singer!" he blurted out. "It must be great to be the principal baritone."

This impelled Mr. Huckstep to say something about preparation and study and natural qualifications, followed by hints as to the incomes of capable barbers and tailors and skilled chauffeurs. But his remarks were greeted with a stony silence. Mrs. Dugdale's composure was perfect, but Dick gazed blankly at the floor.

Then Aunt Eleanor showed Mrs. Dugdale the way upstairs, and Mr. Huckstep instructed Dick in the art of operating the automatic piano-player. Here Dick, previously so subdued, covered himself with glory. His technique was born of previous experience somewhere, and Mr. Huckstep was satisfied. Dick loved to run the rolls of music through the pianola, and was surprisingly attentive to the signals as they appeared on the revolving paper. Mr. Huckstep was exacting about his pianola music, and it spoke well for Dick that he finally turned it over to him and sat down to his cigar. The new valet made him enjoy his music comfortably as Mr. Huckstep lolled in his chair with closed eyes and Dick — hunched over the stool and in a state of silent rapture — pedalled out the scores of countless operas as though it was the most important occupation in the whole wide world.

When he operated the pianissimo and fortissimo lever, he touched it with half-closed eyes and a lolling of the head that was really affecting; and

he looked so poor and shabby that Mr. Huckstep's heart went out to him. The music endowed him with a pathetic quality — or perhaps it was the very childishness of his appreciation.

This was the first of many similar evenings in the Huckstep home. Mrs. Dugdale was seen but seldom; Dick explained to Mr. Huckstep that she was busy sewing upstairs. As it happened, the cook had left suddenly and Mrs. Dugdale had now become cook as well as maid and dressmaker, insisting that she could easily manage for four people. Dick rushed into the cookless breach and proved himself a perfect trump in helping his mother with the cooking and housework.

When Meriwether said something about paying them more money, Aunt Eleanor blushed and told him that she was already paying them part of her allowance. Mr. Huckstep promptly increased his stated maintenance — to her delight.

One day Mr. Huckstep thought he ought to do something for the boy rather than see him become an ordinary servant, and suggested an automobile school. The automobile era had dawned; and Mr. Huckstep thought of purchasing a car. One of his friends at the country club had told him of the difficulty he was experiencing in finding a capable chauffeur. He had also told him that it cost fifty dollars to go through the automobile school.

So Mr. Huckstep talked chauffeuring with Dick and his mother, and Dick received the suggestion

with gusto and enthusiasm. Soon it was arranged for him to go through the automobile school so as to be qualified to run Mr. Huckstep's prospective machine.

Dick toiled and moiled with admirable persistence and soon learned all about engines and machinery. He proved his mechanical bent by taking the pianola to pieces and cleaning it. That Mrs. Dugdale still harped upon her wish to have Dick become an electrician was Dick's greatest disappointment; but Dick, undeterred, went blithely on and in the fullness of time took his examination and gained his certificate. Then Mr. Huckstep bought a car. And such a car! Dick was to drive a twelve thousand dollar imported French limousine for the Hucksteps!

How Mr. Huckstep in his senses could have entrusted such a magnificent car to Dick is beyond comprehension. Aunt Eleanor was quite sure he was competent. It may have been because of his copper-colored hair, or it may have been because of his resemblance to the truant Jimmy Oyler. Aunt Eleanor had caused a wonderful change in Dick and had carefully coached him out of his bad manners.

Then came the old, old story. Dick had many friends among the spear-bearers at the theatre, who gladly accepted his invitation to go joy-riding, lapped in all his twelve-thousand-dollar luxury. There had been drinks along the highways, followed by a collision. All the survivors went

away from the scene of the accident in an ambulance except Dick. Once he had landed, after flying through the glass screen, he had thought of his possible arrest immediately. He had never stopped running until he reached a street-car, which he had boarded. At the depot, Dick caught the first train out of town to escape arrest for exceeding the speed limit.

After that, conditions were not happy at the Huckstep home, and Mrs. Dugdale indicated her desire to leave. Aunt Eleanor paid her an extra ten dollars and she left them one dark night. Of course she promised to let Aunt Eleanor hear from her, and of course she did not.

As time went on and there came no word from Dick, he gradually faded from the recollections of the Hucksteps. Mrs. Dugdale, too, disappeared unobtrusively into space and was seen no more in San Diego. Aunt Eleanor and Meriwether Huckstep jogged along as they had always done, enjoying the things that people of their station in life are able to secure until everything palled. It is so with the most opulent.

They decided to spend some time in New York, feeling that Mr. Huckstep's prosperous business affairs justified a limited degree of extravagance.

With plenty of money, Aunt Eleanor promised herself a brilliant season in New York. The great Tippoo was then appearing in New York. He was sometimes engaged by the wealthy to appear

at private performances. His fees were unconfiscionable.

"I want to do an awfully extravagant thing," said Aunt Eleanor, hugging her husband and speaking with a breathlessness that showed how worked up she was. "It will cost hundreds of dollars!"

She gazed at him so wistfully that he said she might have all the money he could spare; but he was surprised at her wanting so much — for Aunt Eleanor was not extravagant.

"It's Tippoo," she confessed, looking scared to death. "I want to give a dinner at the club and have Tippoo give a private performance."

"Tippoo!" If she had said she wanted to hire one of Europe's kings, Mr. Huckstep could not have been more surprised. In high-priced New York, Tippoo would have to be well paid for a private performance — perhaps as much as a public performance would net him.

"Tippoo!" he repeated helplessly. "My dear Eleanor, there must be some other entertainer who would do just as well and for far less money! Do you realize that you could buy a trunkful of gowns for what this function would cost?"

"But it would be worth it!" she protested. "There is nobody as wonderful as Tippoo — nobody in the whole world. And they say he holds his audiences spell-bound from the very moment he begins his performances. Then think of the prestige it will give us in New York!"

Meriwether Huckstep tried not to sigh as he agreed to place the money at her disposal. It seemed a frightful lot of money, but he cautioned her to drive around to the theatre first, and make the appointment with Tippoo before she made arrangements for the dinner at the club. She came back almost crestfallen enough to cry. An arrogant secretary had informed her that Tippoo could not be seen except by appointment — and he was not to be disturbed today at all.

“And he was so detestable about it!” continued Aunt Eleanor bitterly. “Looked me up and down and concluded that I wasn’t important enough to justify his summoning Tippoo — wasn’t smart or socially prominent enough to interest his stuck-up employer.”

With that she threw herself on the sofa and wailed out how unbearable it was to think that she had half invited Professor Lamsdorff and his wife, who were stopping in New York with a distinguished foreigner, Mr. Ivan Romanov, and his beautiful daughter Feodora. Then Meriwether Huckstep said:

“Why couldn’t we go to the café where Tippoo dines every evening? I know the headwaiter, a former San Franciscan, and he may be able to suggest a way to get what you want.”

Aunt Eleanor brightened up at the suggestion and said that he was the dearest old dear for thinking of it.

It was lucky they arrived early, for the tables

were nearly all taken; and such of them as were not were already ticketed by millionaires and notables of New York. The theatre crowd poured in and the music struck up, filling the place with indescribable stir and merriment. In half an hour there was a craning of necks and a buzzing of voices, as a hundred heads turned toward the doorway. Word had gone ahead that Tippoo was about to enter. There were cries of "Tippoo! Tippoo!" and a scattering of hand-clapping, while Aunt Eleanor and her husband — No! It could not be! It was not possible. It was only an incredible resemblance! Those beautiful curls; that fiery poll!

"It's Dick Dugdale!" gasped Aunt Eleanor, clutching at her husband's sleeve. "There's his arrogant secretary, too."

Meriwether Huckstep had risen from his chair, hardly knowing what he was doing; and there were caustic and resentful remarks behind him as all the millionaires and notables called out at him to sit down.

The hubbub arrested Tippoo's attention; his arm slipped from his companion; his eager gaze sought Aunt Eleanor's — first in wonder, then in amazement and dawning recognition.

A moment more and Meriwether Huckstep was almost appalled to see Tippoo moving toward them through the crowded tables, while necks craned and chairs scraped, and they found themselves in the dizzy focus of a thousand eyes.

Yes, it was Dick — Dick smiling at Aunt Eleanor as if at a long-lost mother — Dick, waving at her and uttering exclamations of joy. He gripped Meriwether Huckstep's hand and patted his shoulder; caught Aunt Eleanor's hand and held it until she was squirming to extricate it; said again and again that he could not believe it — no, he could not believe it. And was it not too wonderful for anything that they should meet again like that!

Their talk was broken and disjointed as it could not fail to be — what with the orchestra banging away, everybody staring at them, and Aunt Eleanor and Mr. Huckstep acutely conscious of the limelight they were in. Dick wanted their address and they wanted to know how he had become the famous Tippoo; and somehow they were talking of the twelve-thousand-dollar automobile in one breath and of San Diego in another, until Aunt Eleanor told him how she had been turned away by his secretary. And he said: "My abject apologies!" She should have any day she liked and he would cancel his performance on that date if she desired to keep him late to amuse her guests.

Before they could realize why he inquired, Aunt Eleanor told him that they had not purchased another automobile to replace the one Dick had demolished. And he immediately insisted on presenting them with one to take the place of their wrecked machine, and left them after leaving an

order with them which placed his private box at the theatre at their disposal, saying:

"If it hadn't been for Aunt Eleanor's lessons in deportment, I would be some one's barber or tailor today. I'll look in to see you tomorrow morning. Dick Dugdale must now take his seat over there as the guest of the governor of one of these United States of America."

Before Aunt Eleanor left New York for California she gave a dinner party, after which the guests were entertained by the famous illusionist, Tippiou. The new automobile followed them by freight to San Diego.

CHAPTER V

A ROMANCE OF THE LINKS

Now some four or five months after my return to California, there came to San Diego news of the closing of Tippoo's theatre in New York. The newspaper article read that the public had suddenly tired of his performances, but he had attributed the scant attendance to the financial conditions and continued to operate his theatre, hoping for better times. Expenses had accumulated rapidly, and after the failure and bankruptcy proceedings, Tippoo disappeared.

I thought of how Melloni, in his wisdom, under like conditions had refrained from striving to force his offerings upon a jaded public and thus saved his hard-earned money. Often I had contemplated producing Melloni's illusions on the Pacific Coast, but this news of Tippoo's failure induced me to defer, if not renounce, my plans. I reflected, too, that as my fortune was very small, I could not afford to risk it.

After several months devoted to golfing with Aunt Eleanor and several gentlemen — Mr. Huckstep's friends from Los Angeles, one of whom was a director of a golf club there — one of these gen-

tlemen offered me the management of the country club. I accepted the position and immediately entered upon my duties in Los Angeles.

Each day was spent in the same monotonous round, here a bill to pay for the club's provisions, there an objectionable caddie to dismiss (for there were frequent reports of stolen balls) a green-keeper to instruct; lastly, after the house was deserted, a turn of the switch to make all dark each night. I am far from wishing to run down the occupation of club-steward, and I can always honor the diplomacy employed in satisfying many different temperaments by nice deference and strict attention to the many requirements of the golfing membership.

After you get into the atmosphere of golf, you become acquainted with most of the eastern golfers who come to California every season. For example, there was Charlotte Sperry. Charlotte had won a number of tournaments, and I know she had played with most of the famous players in the East. The good players all liked Charlotte. She knew how to take her stance easily at the tees, and she could brassy out of a hard lie on the fair green without sklaffing the turf. She didn't play many games without giving heavy odds, but the professionals played on even terms with her when they could spare the time. She could make them extend themselves, too. We Californians heard a great many things about the eastern fixtures from her. A girl like that helps

along the game of golf. If any one thing tries my patience, it's a woman who tries to play the game and doesn't even understand the pairings in a Round Robin tournament.

Charlotte was a good fellow, too. I say it respectfully. She was the kind that I could sit with on the caddie-master's bench and order a glass of lemonade. And she was equally ingenuous when I watched her conversing with the scions of wealthy families in their flannels at an afternoon tea at the club. She knew how to keep her own counsel, but she was observant enough — at least I thought so. She had played enough golf with men to know that some of them have very elastic codes. Golf will betray a man's weaknesses quicker than any other game in the world — especially if he is unsportsmanlike. When she met one of those players who like to toe the ball out of a cup when the lie is bad, Charlotte wouldn't play with him again. Anybody knows that when a girl plays too well for the women, she is compelled to look to the professionals for an interesting game in order to keep in practice. But Charlotte could do what a lot of other women did not dare to do for fear of losing caste among the members.

She played most of her games with the professionals, and on Tuesdays and Fridays, when I had permission to absent myself from my duties at the club-house, Charlotte played with me. I practiced a great deal and was playing a good game. Most of the professionals were Scotch-

men; now and then there was an Englishman. They played around Bogey, day in and day out. It improves your game to play with golfers like that. I know that I lose interest if my partner is unable to keep up with me.

Of all the clubs to which she belonged, I have heard Charlotte say she liked ours the best. The members liked her too, and the caddies would beg to be assigned to her when she went out to the first tee. If you are a golfer, you know what kind of a girl she was from that, as the caddies dislike to work for women. Charlotte never broke the rule against tipping them either.

It was a couple of years after I went to the club when Dick Dugdale came to Los Angeles from some little golf course in New York State. Mackey, the professional who laid off the links, was complaining of a pain in his side, so Dick was engaged to give instructions under Mackey's directions. Mackey recommended him to the Green Committee. Of course, when I heard of him, I was anxious to help my boyhood friend, and seconded Mackey's suggestion.

I can hardly describe Dick's personal appearance without describing my own. He had developed into a clean-cut, elegant young man, but he was not inclined to fraternize with me as might have been expected. I learned, though, that he had been studying medicine during the two years that had elapsed since his failure in New York. This had exhausted what he had saved from the

wreck of his theatrical enterprise, and he had become a professional golfer in order to earn immediate funds. Old man Mackey was his uncle, and his only relative, as Dick's mother had been dead several years.

Dick was unusual for a junior instructor — a long driver, accurate in his putting, and playing his approaches and seconds with confidence and sureness. Golf, to him, was what it was to me — strictly business. He lost no time trifling with the club employes, and it did not take the Green Committee long to see that Dick was just the man for the place. He was a patient and intelligent teacher, but even if he had fallen short, the members would have liked him anyway for a certain nice deference that was a natural manner with him. I hardly remembered in him, the blue-overalled, swearing, little red-haired son of Dugdale, the drunken watchman at the theatre where I first saw Luigi Melloni perform the trick of the two pages. When I told him what I had heard of his replacing the demolished automobile and mentioned that the Hucksteps were in San Diego, he made me promise to say nothing of his poverty to them. I agreed to remain silent, and I kept my word to him.

Dick never associated with those professionals who caroused at the cafés. Some of them called him stuck-up, while others gave him up as a very peculiar fellow. The boys who frequented the public dance-pavilions at the beaches said he was

just plain bashful when he declined to accompany them.

"He can't be holding off for reasons of economy — and dress that well," was what I thought; so I concluded that he was continuing his studies.

But he was not bashful on the links, I noticed.

Dick was a natural golfer. He was not the kind that would play short before a natural hazard. Dick never decided to use two strokes when it could be done with one. If a two-hundred-yard carry was necessary, he would take his brassy and try it, instead of using a midiron for two strokes, as some short players do; and the more threatening the hazard, the more certainly he would get the rise on his ball.

When the tournament at Coronado was announced, Dick was the player the Coast professionals wanted to see. Some golfers — particularly the tourists — had been hoping that with old man Mackey out of the game an amateur might win the Open Championship. It's seldom that an amateur scores better than third in an open tournament with the professionals on the Coast. The ones I know of were lucky enough to draw byes, which is no small advantage.

During the first morning's play at Coronado, Dick returned a record medal-score for the course. He was as steady as a rock. Leading off the first tee with a clean drive over the hill to a blind hole, the ball was found in the cup — from one stroke; and it was a Bogey-four. With this advantage,

he completed the course of eighteen holes, with none over Bogey. He avoided all trouble and holed two lucky approaches.

Dick had more prominence than any man in the big hotel that evening. The tourists began making inquiries concerning the fees at our club, and Dick's methods of instruction.

Charlotte's party stopped at the Coronado Hotel. I had been expecting to see her and have her chat with me about golf. After lunch, I was sitting on the verandah outside of the music-room when she passed.

"So your new professional holds the record," she said. "Is he a new player?"

"He's no baby," I said, jumping up. "He plays with an older head than he presents. He will be along here in a minute and you will observe a young man who would pass for my brother in appearance, with one word of conversation to every twenty of mine. That is a good average for Dick. The professionals say that he is bashful too; otherwise he is my own double!"


"How remarkable!" laughed Charlotte, as she passed on to join her party.

Although the hotel provided excellent music, the golfers were not around the lobby that evening. Most of them went to the bowling-alleys to smoke, or worried across billiard tables. The conversations were hodge-podges of baseball, races and golf, all of which bored me, and I chose to read in the lobby.

I had finished a cigar when Dick joined me. He was immaculately groomed. Not a member of our club appeared more at ease in his dress suit than Dick Dugdale. I suppose it was the result of his theatrical experience. He was seated in his big leather armchair beside me, reading the headlines of an evening paper, when Mackey, the club-maker, limped in and sank into the chair beside Dick, whispering to Dick as he stuffed his cap into one pocket and drew a handkerchief from another, mopping his crisp, gray hair from his forehead the while.

I could not hear what he said to Dick. I gathered that he wanted Dick to come with him. I was wondering where they would go, when I chanced to glance up at the mezzanine floor and saw Charlotte Sperry. She looked like a stage picture as she stood there, holding aside the heavy draperies on the balcony.

Mackey took Dick's arm and urged him to accompany him up the stairs. His insistence was noticeable enough to compel Dick to accompany him rather than attract attention. That is how it looked from where I was sitting; nobody else seemed to be observing what was going on. My perspective may have been faulty — as to that, I do not care to say. It may be that Dick was willing to accompany him, but it seemed to me that Mackey was more anxious than Dick. Had I known no better, I should have accepted what the professionals said — that Dick was bashful. I



might have believed that Dick would hesitate to meet a pretty girl.

"Come along!" Mackey was saying; "you haven't done anything to be ashamed of —"

His Scotch burr was dying away as they passed out of ear-shot. I could hear no more of what he was saying to Dick.

There was something in this incident that aroused my interest, but I remained silent and lit another cigar. Dick and Mackey went upstairs to the balcony — I could see that Dick was not lacking in composure — and Mackey presented him to Charlotte. There were several other people up there with Charlotte, but I did not notice them particularly. Dick and Charlotte chatted like old friends for half an hour — as I remember by the big clock in the lobby. Then a stranger approached them, and Dick entered the elevator on the mezzanine floor and ascended to his room.

I watched the stranger talking to Charlotte for a long time. Then I grew tired waiting to speak to her and went up to the balcony, at which the stranger stared curiously at me and bowed himself away. I suppose, because of the resemblance, he must have thought I was Dick returning, but I did not notice the man at that moment; yet I knew that he was past forty, probably, and of medium height, with a flat face and small black eyes. He was florid, rather stout, and possessed a large frame, which I noticed when I first saw him from the lobby.

"Well, Miss Sperry," I began, "I'm looking for a partner to play with my Aunt Eleanor. She telephoned me that she will be over here from San Diego this afternoon. Do you feel like playing this afternoon?"

"That will be so nice," said Charlotte. "I have just told Mr. Carroll that I had other plans for today when he asked me for a game, so he will probably find another partner."

"If he doesn't," I said, "Meriwether Huckstep may come over with Aunt Eleanor; you might introduce him to your friend Mr. Carroll, if he cares to play golf."

"Mr. Mackey introduced the new professional, Mr. Dugdale," she said, ignoring my last remark. "I was startled by his resemblance to you."

"I wish I had his poise," was my crafty observation.

"You are very elegant young gentlemen," she vouchsafed diplomatically. "You are not related?"

"No; but we were children together — neighbors in San Diego about ten years ago. Maybe," I ventured, "you would like to know more about him."

"Me?" she said. "Why should I? I am no more interested in him than he is curious to know about me."

There was my chance to compliment her, if I had been the impertinent kind. Didn't I know

that every golfer was interested in her? She did not care for flattery, so I said:

"Anyway, it is very evident that Dick has more polish than most professionals."

Charlotte bridled a little.

"Mr. Mackey's father was an officer in the Guards. No one need ever be ashamed of him — under any circumstances. He is a born gentleman."

It seems that Mackey gave Charlotte the only golf lessons she ever had. She had always been grateful to the old man for his efforts. But that is the kind of girl Charlotte was.

"Of course Mr. Mackey is a gentleman!" I agreed; "but Dick has a way that makes me feel that he is above his position. I don't treat Dick exactly as I treat the other professionals because he seems —"

"More like a member of the club," Charlotte interrupted.

That girl could divine the drift of my thoughts and tell me about it too, before I could understand it myself!

"I asked him to play with me," she went on; "I asked him to teach me how to put my wrists into the strokes. He says that is the way to get the distance. I'm going to urge my party of friends to take some lessons from him," she added.

I hoped she would succeed in interesting them. Most of her friends played the duffer kind of

game that knocks all the pleasure out of golf for a good player. Her friends were wealthy, I thought. I hoped Charlotte would interest them and make them take up the game seriously. It meant more revenue for Dick. That was what I was thinking about when she left me. I had forgotten about the insistence with which Mackey had compelled Dick to accompany him to the balcony.

When I went up in the elevator I thought of it again. I am not inclined to gossip and I have no unusual amount of curiosity. Mine was a friendly interest, so I knocked at Dick's door as I passed his room before going to bed that night.

Dick was sprawled across the bed in his shirt-sleeves.

"I saw your light through the transom," I said. "I thought I would stop and say good-night to you before retiring."

"I am glad you came in," he responded, sitting up.

"Dick," I abruptly began, "old man Mackey anticipated me!"

"What's wrong?" he asked innocently. "What did he do to you? Mackey is a fine old gentleman!"

"I agree with you," I said. "But why should he whisper with you before you two departed for my lady's bower this evening?"

Dick stared at the ceiling, waiting for me to continue.

"I meant to take advantage of an opportune

moment and introduce you at the first chance meeting," I complained, "but Mackey thought it was an urgent matter."

Dick offered the cigarettes and swung a chair around for me. He switched on another light and sat down opposite me, smoking.

"You are a good fellow, Jimmy," he said, "and I appreciate the way you have helped me to make some money as a professional golfer. Mackey is my uncle and I am here on his recommendation. I met Miss Sperry at a New York club, of which we were both members — and Mackey knew it. That is why he became excited when I hesitated about renewing the acquaintance. Being in this business for the money alters my status socially. It looked like poor taste to me. I tell you the facts, because I don't want you to feel that Mackey and Yours Truly keep any secrets from you."

Then I said:

"Excuse me for inquiring, Dick! Miss Sperry is the most popular girl in our club. I suppose you know that she has won several championships?"

"She must be a good player," Dick observed, tossing his cigarette into the ashtray.

"She plays the most brilliant long game of any woman on the Coast!" I said.

"Humph!" said Dick. "I'll have to do my best, won't I? . . . Did she say anything about —?" He stammered a little. "Did she mention my game?"

"Only that she wanted to learn to put her wrists into the drive. Dick, I'd teach her for nothing, if I knew how! And if I had your elegant manners —"

"Good-night, Jimmy," said Dick, yawning. "I'll see you in the morning — if you're going."

I got out, too; but I went to bed feeling as if I were learning of another romance. I remember going to sleep and dreaming of my mother and Mr. Carroll, Aunt Eleanor and Mr. Huckstep, Gabrielle Ghica and Janos Kyralyi, Charlotte Sperry and Dick Dugdale. They were all seated in a circle, waiting for me to appear on the pedestal when Luigi Melloni removed the cone. Then Professor Lamsdorff entered with Madame Lamsdorff and when Melloni removed the black cloth, I stood upon a pedestal holding one side of a silver salver and on the other side, also supporting the salver, Feodora Romanov stood upon the other pedestal, a blue-eyed, smiling, blushing divinity with golden-hair — Feodora! — whose very prettiness, smile and blush evoked an immediate murmur of appreciation from the circle of spectators. At length a spark of reality was aroused in me, and the first startling impression was produced by the vision of the young Mr. Carroll of my dream, who had suddenly aged into the stranger's features — the Mr. Carroll who had been up on the mezzanine floor with Charlotte that night.

Unfortunately, my present state of drowsiness rendered it but too easy to doze off again into a

sound slumber. Still, when I awakened, I tried to guess who this stranger could be, and consulted my memory. It was quite useless: I could remember nothing to distinguish this stranger apart from other Carrolls whom I had known.

We had been back from the Coronado tournament about a week. Dick won the event easily and was now a golfer of the first class. He said very little about it; money was what he seemed to worry about, although I thought he was doing very well.

Charlotte Sperry played regularly. She had gone around the course with Dick but once that I knew of; after that I never saw them together. Mr. Carroll was her partner in most of the games. I feared that she was losing interest in her game, as Mr. Carroll was an indifferent player.

After the rains set in, the weeds threatened to choke out the grass. As I had multitudinous duties to perform about the club-house, Dick's knowledge of the ground was a very considerable help to me. There were mowers to keep up on the course and stables requiring much attention. Dick, supervising this work, neglected his game of golf. When he did play occasionally, he was off his drive. Every long ball was either sliced or pulled. Old Mackey gave most of the lessons — at a dollar an hour. Outside of his salary from the club, Dick's income wasn't much to speak of. I knew that he was anxious to make money, yet he did not complain. Charlotte had persuaded sev-

eral young people to join the club, and so had Carroll. Encouragement would have induced them to spend considerable money for lessons. I was surprised to observe that Dick neglected his opportunity. I spoke to him about it one day:

"The prospects are good for some lessons over there," I said, pointing to the first tee. "There are two foursomes driving off — eight people — and Charlotte Sperry is the only real golfer there. That is your business!"

He made no answer — just nodded. I tried again:

"Carroll seems to be wealthy! Why don't you try to interest him in learning to follow-through?"

He watched the players, but made no reply. The first foursomes party had holed out at Number One. Carroll, in the second four, disappeared over the hill.

"Carroll needs a great deal of drilling to rid him of those faulty methods," I urged. "Why don't you put him through the hoop?" I asked slangily.

"I guess I can worry along without their money," he vouchsafed.

He said it in a way that meant "lost ball" — so far as that subject was concerned. I "dropped another ball and played three," so to speak:

"You'll have more time for practice — now that the weeds are down."

That one must have rolled out of bounds, too, for he changed the subject, saying:



"I'm going east next month. While I am here, I want to do all I can to help you get the course into nice shape."

"Anything wrong?" I inquired.

"Nothing at all," he answered, buttoning his yarn jacket and swinging off across the clock-green.

Then I had a long talk in the club-maker's shop with Mackey. Dick's father had been a dipsomaniac, and when this became known to his mother's people, the Mackeys, they tried to induce her to leave him, but she refused to go to them. His father was the son of Sir Richard Dugdale, who married a daughter of Lord Holcroft. There were two sisters — Susan, Dick's grandmother, and Josephine Holcroft, who married Baron Laszlo, a member of the Austrian ambassador's suite in London.

Mackey had heard from a firm of English attorneys, and there was to be a settlement of the estate of Lord Holcroft, whose two daughters, Susan and Josephine, were believed to be dead. Unless other claimants appeared, Dick was the direct blood-heir of Lord Holcroft, as the attorneys could find no trace of the other daughter, Josephine, who married the Baron Laszlo.

Dick had just recently heard from the English law firm. They advised him to appear in England and file suit for his property rights.

Mackey talked the matter over with me, and we agreed to lend Dick what money he might need.

Mackey also told me that Dick had been spending almost every evening with Charlotte Sperry since he met her at Coronado that night. He had known Charlotte in New York, when his business was prospering. Charlotte had objected to Dick's giving golf lessons, and Dick had pretended to be off his game.

It is easy for me to rattle off the substance of what old man Mackey told me, but it took the old man nearly two hours to finish the story. He hadn't finished with some of the particulars, either, when this Mr. Carroll came into the shop to buy some balls — and I left.

In the club-house, the two foursomes were lunching together. The waiters had set up a table for eight. I dined at about the same time and could hear them chatting from where I was seated. Stephen Carroll sat at the right of Charlotte, and I saw enough of him to realize that he was not in his best humor.

While I was absorbing these details, Dick passed the window. Charlotte saw him and beckoned him to her side with a motion of her hand when he raised his cap. It took him back a bit, I thought. There was just the flicker of an eyelash, but I noticed it. He entered the dining-room. Except for the foursomes party and myself, the dining-room was empty. Charlotte introduced Dick as the Champion Golfer of the Coast. Then she asked him to go around with her that afternoon. Dick agreed to be ready at two

o'clock, and left immediately. I watched the red come over Carroll's face and spread down the back of his neck. Since Charlotte came to the club, Carroll monopolized all of her time on the links. Unless it was a foursomes party, nobody could play with her, it seemed to me.

I could see that Carroll was not happy, and a pretty, slim, young lady in the party, whose name I did not know at the time, remarked to the others that Mr. Carroll seemed gloomy. How well I remember her golden hair and deep blue eyes!

I am by no means a fatalist; and yet I cannot refrain from remarking here that many events in human life seem to encourage the views of fatalists. Suppose, dear reader, that, on leaving the Dugdale shanty to proceed to the interview with Luigi Melloni, he had declined to accept me as his apprentice. Suppose that I had proceeded to boarding-school on leaving Aunt Eleanor's home, and that destiny had opened before me one of the fairest pages of my life; I should certainly have been delighted at such a glorious future, but in my heart I should have been inclined to doubt its realization. In fact, until I met Dick Dugdale and went to the theatre, I looked forward to my four years' schooling with the intention of preparing to enter one of the professions. This course would have occupied much time, as I intended to enter the office of an established practitioner until I reached the proper age, and I was quite young! Then, when I considered myself old enough, I would re-

turn to Berkeley and set up as an independent practitioner.

But fate decided otherwise, and I must be drawn into my real destiny when I was about to escape from it. The means employed were a cigarette-smoking companion and his unscrupulous father, who apprenticed me to a performer, and encompassed my return to these friends as the manager of a golf club. But I was going to recall my reminiscences after my fortunate return, and I will take up the story from the point where I left off.

Some of the women players were in the habit of asking me to make their purchases at the shop across the driveway. This golden-haired young lady passed my window on her way to the shop that day, when Charlotte stopped her. I heard her say she intended to get a box of paper tees, and timidly I volunteered to go for her. She nodded and said, "Thank you," but my head was in a whirl as I darted across the driveway to serve her.

When I entered Mackey's shop to get the box of tees, Mr. Carroll came in behind me. Dick Dugdale was there, shining a putter with a sheet of emery paper. Mackey was busy at his desk, and Carroll wrangled with him about a handicap. It seems that they were to play for a ball a hole that afternoon. I could see that Carroll was in a bad humor, and wanted the advantage. Eventually Mackey gave in. Then Carroll began to make remarks — in a sneering manner — about golf as a

game, and drifted into insinuations against the men who made money at it. I believe he called them *golf-parasites*. Dick was shining his putter viciously with his back turned to Mr. Carroll. I began to think it would be a pleasing outcome if Dick, taller and much lighter, would administer a sound thrashing to the sturdy Mr. Carroll. That is what I thought, but I don't always voice what it is in my mind. It doesn't pay!

Well, a club of that size is certain to have some objectionable members on the roll. A few of them were unbearable; but Carroll's abuse was something of a novelty. No one had ever gone quite that far, to my knowledge. Then he seemed to grow angrier when nobody answered.

"A fine set of rules they have at this club!" he was saying. "A common professional, living on the crumbs thrown him by the members, is allowed to play with the ladies — because they haven't sense enough to know any better!"

Then — Dick answered, without looking round:

"Jimmy," he said to me, talking slowly and in his most casual tones, "I've noticed some crude material on different golf courses, but I doubt if any other club would tolerate anything quite so raw as this Carroll person."

Neither of us could prevent what occurred — it happened so suddenly. Carroll had made a quick swing at the back of Dick's head and struck him behind the ear. Dick went crashing over a chair and into a tangle of clubs which were falling from

the swaying rack as he struggled to stay on his feet — which he did. Then Mackey wouldn't let me interfere, and they squared off and faced each other. Carroll was waiting as Dick struck back; but the blow was warded off and his powerful arm shot out with force enough to fell an ox. Dick barely escaped it, and immediately rushed at the heavier man with a staccato of blows, one of which reached Carroll's chin and the burly figure collapsed. It all happened so rapidly, it was over in a minute. Carroll opened his eyes and the look in them was murderous as he rose to his feet. Then he suddenly turned and ran out of the shop!

"Yellow!" exclaimed Dick, staring in astonishment after the retreating Carroll.

Mackey said nothing, but busied himself rearranging his disordered shop, and I went back to the office.

The golden-haired lady was waiting for her box of tees. I had forgotten them in the excitement. I hurried back to the shop. The door was ajar and I barely escaped a fall over the old man, who was kneeling beside the prostrate body of Dick, soaking his head with cold water.

"Carroll came back! He struck Dick with a putter — from behind!" Mackey said, succinctly. "Fetch some ice — and a basin!"

Someone had gossipped. Carroll had learned why Charlotte wouldn't allow him to call evenings. When he learned that Dick was dress-suiting it

with Charlotte every evening — to his own exclusion — he was very angry. When she made an appointment with Dick for a game that afternoon, his rage mastered him at the luncheon-table.

Of course, Mackey and I agreed with Dick that the scandal ought to be hushed up. There was no danger of Carroll talking. He was probably too cowardly; besides, he feared the police. At any rate, he resigned from the club.

I went to see Dick every day for two weeks while he was laid up from the blow. Whenever I went to the hospital during an afternoon, Charlotte was usually there with some friend, so Dick was not lonesome. Some of Charlotte's people knew about their engagement, and it was not a secret from her mother, who asked Charlotte to wait and make a formal announcement, with entertainments, as soon as Dick was well.

I suppose Charlotte's people were wealthy and would have advanced Dick what he needed, but Dick wouldn't hear of it. He was too proud to accept anything from Charlotte's family. So he spoke to me about the loan which Mackey and I had promised him before he was struck down by Stephen Carroll.

"Tell Mackey to have that money ready," he said to me one day; "and if you haven't changed your mind, have yours ready, too — the money you offered to lend me to finance the legal steps to secure my inheritance from those titled ancestors across the pond."

"Certainly! The money is at your disposal!" said I carelessly.

A thousand dollars is not a fortune, but it was more money than a great many men — smarter than Jimmy Oyler — could produce on short notice. Still, since Dick needed a few hundred dollars, I was entirely willing to let him have the money. Charlotte was introducing the golden-haired girl as Miss Feodora Romanov! . . . At last I had met the little girl of my childish recollections, the little maid who had clutched my chubby hand for protection on the road in Berkeley, the child whose acquaintance I had sought when she lived with the Lamsdorffs. What should I say? My head was all on fire. An inspiration temporarily relieved me from my embarrassment.

"When is it going to happen?" I enquired, meaning Dick's wedding.

Dick was for going to England and filing his law-suits at once. This would require but a few months. He expected the other claimants to compromise and he could then return to California for a wedding at Sacramento. That was Dick's idea. Charlotte favored an immediate wedding, so that she might accompany her husband to England.

"Won't you let me get what money we need?" she pleaded. "I want to go with you."

"I'll meet your wishes halfway if I can," Dick countered. "I'll take you with me, but I won't take the money."

Then he said to me:

"I'll give you and Mackey my notes for a thousand dollars now; then we'll have a wedding at once, if Charlotte says so, and you shall be my best man."

"And Feodora my bridesmaid," added Charlotte.

A thousand dollars was a large sum of money, and many things might happen. I was entirely willing to lend Dick the money, but I feel ashamed of the feeling of relief it gave me to hear what Charlotte said as I was leaving:

"I'll endorse the notes and ask my mother to buy them — to-morrow!" she whispered to me.

Three days later there was a wedding in that room. Feodora and I stood up with them. Nobody was there but Charlotte's intimate friends and old man Mackey, who was responsible for the happy ending of the romance begun in New York when Dick was the famous Tippoo. Triumphant, I thought of Feodora!

Feodora was the most beautiful creature I had ever beheld. She had told me that she was about to leave Los Angeles when I asked permission to call! My triumph was to last but a short time when I stood up with her at the wedding, and became to me the prelude of a terrible mystification. Her manner was cold.

In my despair, I remained in my room all the following day, refusing food. At length, bowed down by the weight of such intense emotions, I

fainted. For a week I remained in a raging fever, unable to recognize those about me.

Shortly after my recovery, Dick and Charlotte packed their belongings and left for England. Dick received a trunkful of silver gifts from members who had learned to play golf as he taught it.

CHAPTER VI

THE CONVICT PUGILIST

That was several years ago, but I have seen Dick and Charlotte since they returned from their successful trip to England. Dick practices medicine in Sacramento and has a big following. Aunt Eleanor visits them frequently, as Mr. Huckstep has entered the banking field in the Sacramento district. She is crazy about Charlotte's baby. His middle name is Mackey.

Through them I learned that Feodora's father had occasion to visit Sacramento frequently with his daughter. Afterwards I learned from Dick that Stephen Carroll was an old acquaintance of Mr. Ivan Romanov, who was a stockholder in Carroll's mining ventures.

I learned afterwards that this unworthy man had emerged from his hiding-place on Dick's recovery. He had written to Mr. Romanov, informing him that his daughter was associating with Charlotte Sperry who was about to marry one of two very disreputable play-actors; that she was a member of the proposed bridal party, and that he had known my mother and my antecedents long ago.

Thus, then, all the friendship — all those protestations of devotion — were only a farce when I heard him beg my mother to accept his offer of marriage. This was the man, Stephen Carroll! He could not have felt the slightest affection for her. Doubtless her woman's instinct told her that. Because of my loyalty to Dick, he sought to destroy my character by spreading false reports concerning my past.

He was perfectly successful in this respect, for from that time my best friends at the club, fearing probably that the comment I endured might be reflected on them, suddenly turned their backs on me. This desertion affected me deeply, but I had too much pride to beg the renewal of such passing friendship, and I resolved on quitting the club immediately.

Carroll, like the coward he was, had fled to Mexico after the atrocious insult he had offered me by casting aspersions upon my mother's family. Her mother, the story ran, was already once married when she deserted her husband and ran away to Paris with a French sculptor named Guillaume Champfleury.

I determined to devote myself ardently to an investigation, and probe thoroughly my ancestry, of which, as yet, I knew only what my mother's teachings had led me to believe — that I was well-born.

Aunt Eleanor, who knew my mother only as a neighbor, could tell me nothing. How was I to

go about discovering my patent of gentility which my mother had assured me was my heritage? The first step would necessitate my accumulating sufficient means to devote my time exclusively to the sifting of my ancestry.

Full of this idea, I sold everything I possessed, and took offices in San Francisco as the agent for one of the best makes of adding-machines. Here, completely retired from my old associates, I schemed to promote sales and accumulate money. I cannot describe what patience I devoted and how I toiled during the six months I spent in the repair shop, where I learned the scientific principles involved in the construction and operation of my machines; but I was more than compensated for it, as my mastery of the business was complete. From this time my success was assured, and but for the following episode, I might have remained in this business for many years.

The agent who pushes an adding-machine business is a sort of schemer when he has a live prospect located. This was especially true during the high-price days, when there were at least twenty types on the market at that time. All salesmen were enthusiasts and gave the competition much abuse. Sometimes the machinists were accused of tricking the machines, too. That was what the agents believed of repairmen in general. Of course, there were honorable exceptions; I do not say that there were not. There may have been some repairmen who were a credit to the

adding-machine business — respectable, honest, conscientious men — men whom I believe would have scorned to tamper with competing machines the instant they were left to themselves. I say that there were such repairmen; I sincerely hope there were. But I had never met with them.

The business had its attractions; it was an exciting game of unlimited possibilities, and the commissions were substantial sums of money; it had its favorable angles. But it had its unfavorable side, too: complaints from the users — “the grief,” as the repairmen called it. And there were the trial orders that could not be developed into sales; and aggravating experiences with understrappers — accountants who asked for trial machines for experimenting purposes. There was something very odd and unaccountable about trial machines of this particular class. You might install a trial machine with as much patience, time and effort as would be required for the adjustment of an eight-day clock, and leave it with an experimenting accountant, and five or ten minutes afterward, when you were out of the place, it would become an awful, soul-destroying object of your profanity. I do not wish to be insulting, but I firmly believe if you placed the best machine in the world where an average accountant could experiment with it, after having had it thoroughly tested and pronounced as nearly perfect as it could possibly be made, and then allowed him to try it for five minutes that, when you approached

it again, you would find that it would add wrong, refuse to print, or the ribbon would twist itself into knots, and lose its color all over your hands, and then, while you were explaining away these trifling difficulties with the machine, the accountant would announce coldly that the machine had locked up; and it would take two repairmen a full day, working while the clerks snickered, to get it unlocked again and adjusted so that the additions might be correctly listed and totaled.

I can remember many "grief" experiences.

Once on my way home, I met an Austrian commission merchant who had a big business in the produce market. He was known to every fruit-dealing concern in the state, and a shrewder man in his line than the average in that business. His accountant needed an adding-machine and was investigating all the different makes. The Austrian was anxious to give my machine a trial, and promised to give me the preference over the competition if all things were equal. I demonstrated the operations and talked up the uses to which our machine was particularly well adapted in his office. Two weeks later I was asked to take the machine away. Grief! The machine had locked up — and I lost the sale.

I received an inquiry from a little one-eyed German fellow, who was the secretary for a lumber concern. They had just completed the consolidation of a chain of mills under one management. He said they were opening a general office, and

would try my machine. I installed a demonstrating machine and gave the necessary instructions, but two weeks later it was rejected and I hauled it out. Grief! The machine had been adding wrong. I lost that sale, too.

A dapper little insurance agent called at my office to investigate a wide-bank machine for tabulating. He was inclined to believe that his stenographers could save considerable time for his accounting department at the end of each month, if an adding-machine proved practical for the addition of separate columns of figures in the listing of his month-to-month policies on the tickler. I sent him an electric machine. Three days after it was installed they wheeled the machine out into the street and telephoned me to get it. The motor had leaked and the oil was running out of the drive, ruining an expensive office-rug. The electric lights in his office had no current and were useless. Grief! The thing had blown a fuse; it was not equipped with the correct motor!

I sent a trial machine to the Italian bank in a town across the bay. I became rather friendly with most of the clerks and often dined with them. One day I called, intending to speed up the sale. The operator was swearing over the machine. I asked him what was the matter and he told me:

"I am behind with my work and this thing is no good! The paper does not feed — you see?"

"Let me 'phone for another machine," I said.

"This demonstrator may be worn out," he

said. He had become mollified. "As you say," he told me a little later, "an old machine may not give entire satisfaction."

Another machine was rushed to him and the faulty one removed to a repair shop. I could not help feeling that to a certain extent the machine was now unpopular at that bank. With this incident in mind, I was in no hurry to go there again until I received a letter in which complaint was made that the last model would not print. Trouble occurring twice during one trial of our product lost me this customer. Grief! This time the ribbon was twisted!

In the capital of my state I once appointed a sub-agent whose daughter was particularly nice to me. Laura was eighteen and very pretty, like the loveliness of the sunset and the stars, with soft golden hair and twinkling blue eyes, much like her mother's. Laura was a good girl, quite an able musician, and very serious at an age when a young girl should be gay and joyous. Later I was to discover her resourceful mind.

I spent many pleasant evenings at the home of the sub-agent — Ward was his name. We enjoyed good music and were very happy — all except one young fellow who called occasionally. He often seemed restless and uncomfortable, as if, perhaps, he found the proceedings slow.

When I had finished my fall canvass of the city I left the capital after a pleasant stay with Dick

and Charlotte, and a short visit with Aunt Eleanor and Mr. Huckstep. I sent a trifling Christmas gift to Laura and New Year greetings to all the Wards that winter.

I made another visit to this section of the state in May, to be present at the opening of bids for rust-proofed U. S. Navy standard machines for use at sea. I stopped at the capital and called on the Wards again. They received me cordially. Mrs. Ward, with a delightful unconsciousness that made me feel very much at home, led me to the music-room and showed me one of my machines installed there as a sample; beside it, in a big red envelope, she kept a collection of cuts and instruction forms which she said Laura liked to explain to her callers. Mention of this red envelope — it was a brilliant magenta — reminds me of a curious antipathy which I have always since felt toward that shade of red. As this, however, has no connection with the events I am relating, it ought, I think, to be so stated now.

Ward had several machines at the sub-agency office, and as Laura wanted to understand the mechanism of the machine, he had sent one of the machines to his home. He had instructed her and she was a very good demonstrator, he assured me. She often demonstrated for him before prospective buyers. Laura already knew more about the mechanical construction of it than I knew myself.

Laura had entered the room and was telling me

about her engagement to Jan Carroll — an athletic young giant, with an odd eye-affliction. He had no control of the muscles of the right eye, which would roll in a most distressing manner. His left eye was much smaller than the right and it glowered upon me with a look of such concentrated ferocity that, but for Ward's presence, I probably should have felt nervous. It was usually half-closed and always watery. He was a powerful man and sometimes his right eye would focus upon me with a look of appraisal that was most disconcerting. You always felt that he was looking at you whenever he was addressed, yet it was impossible to determine which eye looked at you. I mentioned these feelings of awe of mine to Ward, and he said he had worse ones than mine. His remarks made my flesh creep.

In the time I spent with the Wards Jan seldom joined in the conversation; and I could never once say, positively, whether he was looking at me or not. He was a splendid machinist under Ward, and had every detail of an adding-machine at his tongue's end. This was the only subject on which he would talk. With a beaming cheeriness I listened to a monotonous recital of his experiences in different factories, but his foreign accent eventually bored me, and my politeness gave way to an air of annoyance as he scowled around.

I congratulated Laura on picking out a fine man physically, who was evidently an experienced mechanic, an expert, able to discuss his trade very

intelligently. A woman is able to appreciate a good talker and I wanted to say something complimentary.

"I am going to marry him," she said simply.

"Are you satisfied with his love of you?" I asked.

"Yes," she said. "He told me that he walked to his work and thus saved three thousand car-fares. My engagement ring was bought with the nickels he saved in that way," she added, with a little catch in her voice.

"Where is he from?" I inquired.

"He seldom speaks of his past, and I don't bother," she said. "I know that he loves me, and as I love him — that is the only matter that interests me," she finished.

I felt a little hurt.

"I only asked because I am quite certain that his past must be interesting. His vocabulary and command of language seem most unusual — for a foreigner," I ventured.

"Nothing excuses carelessness of expression or coarse language in a man who has been properly brought up," she replied. "I have no desire to investigate his past," she continued; "I trust him."

Her confidence in him was unbounded, but I thought he should offer to tell them something of his antecedents. I spoke to Laura's father before I left but did not express what was in my mind.

"Laura says she and Jan Carroll are going to be married," I remarked.

"Yes." He seemed to dislike the subject.

"Don't you like him?" I asked.

"Well," he said reluctantly. "I am not the boss — Laura is of age!" He pondered a moment. "I've known him only since he came to work in my shop. He worked for the competition in the East."

There was a silence.

"We've been having a lot of foggy weather lately," Ward observed, changing the subject abruptly.

We went outside and blinked at a cloudy sky. That was the last time I ever saw Ward alive. I left the capital after his sudden death from pneumonia, closing the Sacramento office. The Wards were remembered as one of many wholesome, hospitable families I had met among my sub-agents, just that — nothing more.

The company wished to enlarge my territory and I sold the agency to one of the salesmen and undertook the task of sales-manager, with offices in another state, where for sometime I remained. A new type of machine then appeared on the market; competition was keener. About this time I decided upon a visit to the Dugdales and Aunt Eleanor. At the capital I made some inquiry for the Wards, but only learned that Laura had married and that Mrs. Ward had given up the old

home. I represented myself as an old friend of the family, but no one knew where to find them. Ignoring a telephone call, I left town that night.

My agent met me at the depot and we went to the office in San Francisco. I found his office in good shape, all complaint-record-slips properly filed, and an encouraging number of mail inquiries in the follow-up-cabinets. Among the letters shown me was an unusual one — from the state prison. It had been written by a trusty who acted as the prison accountant. It requested a competing demonstration of our machine.

"Who is this trusty?" I inquired of my agent.

"The man who drives the Black Maria says he is up for killing a prize-fighter." Running his finger along the lines of the letter, he continued: "Did you notice the wording of that letter? He writes like a factory graduate!" He poked at the paper again. "Notice this?"

"Notice it!" I said. "Look at the specifications! It is the toughest test I have ever seen!"

The requirements were indeed ably set forth. I remember commenting on one of the tests because it was simpler than the others.

"This fifteen-nine test doesn't amount to much," I observed; "it is only straight addition. You add fifteen into the machine; then depress all of the nine-keys; set the repeater; pull the handle fifteen times; then set the total sign and pull the handle. Any nine-bank machine should clear because the total is more than the machine will

carry and the addition is thrown out of the accumulating-wheels."

"Hold on before you overlook a trick!" exclaimed the agent. "The machine will fail to clear if the pawl on the last wheel becomes loosened from the pin," he explained. "I wish you could handle this deal with the prison," he went on. "Your long experience will satisfy the home office officials that the machine was properly presented if we should lose the sale."

I immediately decided to do this — and felt eager to meet the competition in my old territory. One of the best machines in stock was expressed to the prison at once.

The clerk of the prison, a San Franciscan with whom I was acquainted, met me at the entrance to the prison grounds on the afternoon of the following day. He informed me that Number Eighty-six, a trusty who acted as the prison accountant, had received my machine, unpacked it and immediately used it on his work with a speed and accuracy that showed perfect familiarity with the machine.

When we reached the building I was told that the convict approaching — a powerfully built but slouching fellow — was Number Eighty-six. I would have remembered him among a million convicts.

"Hello, Oyler," was his greeting, as if I were an every-day caller. The uncontrolled eye rolled and the little watery one glared at me.

I shook hands gingerly, presently recalling the capital, the Wards, Laura, whose mother had shown me how she kept one of my machines in the house—and Jan Carroll. He spoke of Mrs. Ward's recent death, but had very little of anything else to say to me, addressing some further remarks to the clerk concerning his affairs in the prison office.

"I'll see you again, I hope," he called to me, as he returned to the building. His tone was not entirely satisfactory, yet it was deferential; but it reminded me of the oily mouthings usually offered, when deemed necessary, by café head-waiters when you are about to be seated in the most undesirable and dismally obscure corner of the grill.

The sight of one of those cramped tables in the dark, waiting for me, always rouses every evil instinct in my nature. I feel that I want to jerk it off its legs and hammer it over the head of the autocrat who has assigned me to such wretchedly depressing surroundings. That was my frame of mind. Carroll's tone annoyed me. It was only a trifling detail, but little things are important to a man who makes his living by selling adding-machines.

"You were acquainted with Kyralyi?" queried the clerk.

When this name struck me a thousand thoughts crossed my brain. Janos Kyralyi! Jan Carroll! Of course, this gigantic foreigner must be the

brigand husband of Gabrielle Ghica! Could it be a misunderstanding, or was it only a coincidence that his name corresponded with the proportions of the man Luigi Melloni once described? Did I understand the clerk to say Kyralyi? For a moment I remained motionless, still smiling at the clerk. Then I resolved to betray nothing of what I knew until I had time to think over the matter and perhaps communicate with Luigi Melloni. These thoughts ran through my mind swiftly and it was almost immediately that I replied to the clerk.

"I did not know his name was Kyralyi," I said. "He was once in my employ under the name of Jan Carroll. Why is he imprisoned?"

"In for murder," said the clerk laconically. "You noticed his queer eye?"

"I should say so! That is how I remembered him so quickly. What caused it?"

"Gouged in a prize-fight," the saturnine clerk informed me. "He is known as Kid Carroll and would be a top-notch heavyweight today if he were free."

We conversed, or rather, I talked along in a more or less rambling manner; I told the clerk about interesting bits of political news bearing pertinently, I thought, on his chances for a re-appointment to the clerkship, working the conversation around to a discussion of my machines and places where I had sold them for use in state departments.

He listened patiently but, it seemed to me, without interest. In one of the pauses he excused himself and entered the office. We had been talking on the lawn in front of the main entrance to the prison building. I shall always remember that old penitentiary. If I could only draw, and knew how to paint, I could make a lovely sketch of those old walls today.

The clerk returned with a bundle of catalogues in a big red envelope.

"Kyralyi wrote to every firm in the country manufacturing an adding-listing or calculating device," he said apologetically, as if he were on the defensive or preparing to refuse a friend his support. "The Prison Board will only buy on a competitive basis," he concluded.

"That is to be expected," I responded, proud of my machine.

The clerk smoked silently. Then he took the red envelope — full of adding-machine literature — back to the office, making no comment; possibly he felt that I would offer him a bribe. I had no such intention, as I had never been guilty of stooping to this method of making sales.

I was captivated by the beauty of the prison grounds, which I enthusiastically praised to Kyralyi, or Carroll, as I knew him, when he came out to the lawn again, but its charm was not for him. He wore a white negligee shirt and a belt supported his striped prison trousers. His curious affliction of the eyes caused me the same un-

certainly as to which eye was focused on me as I had found so baffling at the capital, but he displayed none of the old interest in adding-machines. I attributed his loss of interest to the prison life. He looked well. I saw the play of powerful biceps through the thin shirt, such muscles as I had seen developed by blacksmiths, and also the broadened, big-knuckled hands I had often noticed on machinists. Sitting down beside me he said meaningly:

“You will have bad luck here; you will not be treated fairly.”

It was plain that he was endeavoring to be friendly and as he paused, I nodded attentively. He went on:

“I have been paroled to leave this place, provided some firm will employ me at a living salary when I leave.”

His eyes were glowering everywhere — and nowhere; I could not see where. Astonished at his statement, I gazed at him, striving to get his meaning.

“They say you are in for murder,” I said; “how about that? Does the Board grant a parole to murder cases?”

He fished a clipping from his pocket and passed it to me silently. I read a newspaper story of a fatal prize-fight. The news section pictured the defeated gladiator falling. His head had struck an unpadded board in the flooring, the reporters said; he had died of concussion of the brain. His

opponent was not entirely to blame for his death.

I looked inquiringly at him, with my features composed — as well as I could manage it — to what you might call a cheerful expression, and asked:

“Your wife — what of Laura?”

I had never heard positively that they were married; but Kyralyi leered at me and snickered:

“She is up at the capital with —” he paused and snickered — “I — we have a baby girl,” he finished.

The dark trees rustled in a rising wind. I drew in my breath with a little catch. Then I glanced at the striped trousers of the trusties as they worked at their gardening, and I thought of Laura with a baby — its father in stripes. I glanced at Carroll, or Kyralyi. I think he was trying to look at me, too, but I couldn't tell where his eyes were focused. Then I blurted out:

“Does she need any money?”

My question sobered him.

“No,” he said. “Laura's parents were insured; she collected their life insurance policies.”

I shook off my feeling of oppression and irrelevantly inquired:

“When will the Prison Board examine the adding-machines?”

“At five o'clock this afternoon?” he vouchsafed.

He rose from the lawn and beckoned me to fol-

low him. I did so and we entered the prison office.

I saw a room of possibly one hundred feet square, equipped like any modern mercantile office, convict trustees working at roller-top desks. Kyralyi removed the cover from my adding-machine and began a setting of all the keys of each unit, progressing down the keyboard, pulling the handle briskly on depressing all keys of each unit, using nine fingers for printing. He was a very good operator; not nearly so rapid as the girls I have seen at work in the offices of the telephone companies — but very speedy indeed.

“I can demonstrate them all,” he explained, showing me some half dozen other sample machines which he said were there in competition with mine.

“There is no comparison between those makes,” I said, “and the machine I am offering them.”

I was going to say more, but he interrupted me and with an odd note in his voice said:

“Take my advice and stay away from the competition! Tell your associates that you missed the train.” Again he said: “You will have no luck; you will face a trick!”

“I am no quitter,” I objected. “I’ll take my chances.”

I left Kyralyi but he gave me no hint as to what was contemplated. The clerk was in an au-

tomobile at the door to take me out of the prison grounds. On leaving me at the gate he said apologetically:

"I'm sorry I couldn't give you more time; Kyralyi told you —"

"Five o'clock," I cut in. "That's all right. All I want is a fair chance with the others. I'll be on hand at five."

He nodded and drove his car back to the prison building in a cloud of dust.

I sauntered leisurely back to the town, smoking my cigar and drinking in a deep, calm sense of well-being and gladness from the very beauty of a perfect day — the broad road winding down to the station between tall trees, the shiny river in the valley, the green hills beyond.

Coolidge, for years the star salesman with the competition, was loitering about the hotel. We joked about our home office officials far away back East, all unconscious of what we, far away that afternoon in that peaceful village, were trying to do for them. Then Coolidge told me that the prison directors were due on the next train, and explained their procedure to me. I tried to lead the conversation around to Kyralyi, but Coolidge evaded, determined to avoid such a discussion, I could see.

"I venture to say I have a speaking acquaintance with several trustees," Coolidge would say; "that is part of the game!"

Then he would talk on some other subject.

A meeting of the prison directors was held at five o'clock, and when Coolidge went in with me four other salesmen — each representing a competing make — were seated in the waiting-room.

The clerk explained the wishes of the Board as to the method of making the presentation of each model separately and also mentioned that the paroled trusty, Kyralyi, was an expert machinist. The Board desired that Kyralyi advise with them, and propose such demonstrations as would show to the directors that time could be saved as well as accuracy assured by the use of such a machine.

"You are the first man," said the clerk, poking his head through the doorway and nodding to me. "They'll dispose of you first," he mumbled, as we entered the office. His manner was not at all encouraging.

I rather prided myself on my salesmanship. Demonstrating my particular machine was the one thing that I felt I knew more about than any other living man. So I told the clerk to sit down and watch me show these directors what my machine would do. He fell into the suggestion with a readiness that had something uncanny about it, huddling himself into a chair on the opposite side of the room and lighting a cigar. Then I approached my machine, wheeled it around before the directors and in about fifteen minutes concluded uninterrupted what I felt was one of my very best demonstrations, without a hitch of any kind. My effort was a great success.

"It is wonderful," commented one of the directors, as I passed him a paper upon which I had caused the machine to extract the square root of a number. He was favorably impressed, I knew. Throughout the demonstration he had manifested great curiosity concerning the accumulating dial. He would sit and watch it as it added with a puzzled expression. At the conclusion of my remarks he rose, called Kyralyi to the machine, and took his place behind him in an attentive attitude.

Kyralyi's eyes, I noticed, were glowering around in that same old ferocious manner that had caused me to feel so uneasy two years before at the capital. He proceeded to set figures into the machine, rapidly accumulating a sum well into the millions. Then he tore off the strip after taking the total and silently made a mental footing, following the figures up and down the columns with his pencil. From that day to this I have regarded all machinists with a mixture of awe, suspicion and hate.

"Wrong addition!" he said icily, as he passed the printed slip to the director behind him.

The director asked the clerk to foot it, which he did — shame-facedly I thought — and verified Kyralyi's pencil total.

"Wrong addition!" repeated the clerk succinctly and Kyralyi laughed — one of those irritating, senseless snickers of his.

"Any machine may be tricked," I insinuated

craftily. The imperturbability I could assume before a faulty machine always was the envy of competing salesmen and the admiration of my associates. Then all of the directors began to talk at once — all but one old fellow, Mundy.

“I’m going to try it myself,” he said.

We watched him set figures as he pulled the handle slowly and patiently, accumulating a column that looked to be about six inches long on a strip of three-inch paper. He paused, peered around uncertainly, then beckoned me to the machine with a motion of his hand.

Now I come to think it over, was that old man as stupid as he looked or was he —? No, impossible! There was such a simple, childlike expression about him.

“You take the total,” he ordered tersely.

I pulled the handle and as I felt the wheels spinning around, suddenly lost confidence in my machine. I was suffering from a regular panic which I could attribute to no other cause than my warning that I would not be treated fairly. I, who had just treated so lightly the demonstration I gave to the directors — I, who had obtained such success as a salesman, trembled like a child.

The old director had set small items into the machine; the total should have been less than five figures. As the type-heads struck the paper with a sharp click, I could see nine millions in figures printed as the total! Because of a loose pawl, I lost this sale. Grief! The machine was

throwing in nines! I was in a state of febrile excitement which doubled my strength and energy and I turned and fled; and as I sped, I heard Mundy call after me,

"Your machine is rejected!"

Coolidge got that order. I left for headquarters that night to resign my position of sales-manager. I told them, in the parlance of the trade, that the machine would not "stand up."

Owing to my persevering researches, I had nothing left to learn in San Francisco concerning my father; but in order to carry out my determination to learn something of my ancestry, I still had another line of inquiry. I allude to the maternal line — my mother's family.

While occupied with this idea I made active investigations; I applied to the public records and their keepers, whom my tenacious importunity drove into despair. But all the information I collected only brought me the name of my mother before she was married to my father in San Francisco. Her maiden name was Marie Laszlo! Melloni's story was still fresh in my memory. Janos Kyralyi's mother was the daughter of Baron Laszlo, an Austrian. If I could only see Janos Kyralyi again, I would question him concerning Baron Laszlo's daughters, I thought. But Kyralyi had been paroled from the prison. Pass we to another incident.

The next few months I spent in the eastern

cities arranging for some special dies for a mechanical device which I had patented for use as a pump; these pumps have since been marketed throughout California. I left Chicago on an Illinois Central train and arrived in St. Louis on a Sunday afternoon. An old acquaintance was to meet me at the Union Station — the most beautiful railroad depot in the West. I paced up and down the mischievous floor and watched the crowd, but saw no familiar faces there — only the brilliant tangle of saucy hats, streaming ribbons and many-colored parasols and dainty white dresses — the beautiful St. Louis girls here to flirt and laugh and watch the crowd.

In the waiting-room I ran across Janos Kyrallyi and the baby, and he introduced Laura's cousin — I do not recall her name. Those eyes of his, as one rolled uncontrolled and the watery one blinked, half-closed, were as baffling as ever. I could not tell if they were focused on me or beyond me. He may have been looking at me — I could not tell — and held out his right hand. In the other he held a leather tool-kit, such as adding-machine repairmen carry. Then I shook hands with Laura's cousin and patted the baby's hand.

"Well, what's new?" I asked, somehow at a loss for something better to say.

"I'm repairing adding-machines in this territory," he answered; "for Coolidge," he added, after a pause. "He was transferred to the St.

Louis territory shortly after I was pardoned. Laura's cousin takes care of the baby."

I wondered why Laura was not with them.

"I know why you are staring," said Laura's cousin. "Janos lost his wife a month ago."

I stammered my regrets.

Just then the baby began to voice her disapproval of me and with some pleasantry for excuse, Laura's cousin turned away, crooning to the child; this parted Kyralyi and me from her.

"My machine at the prison was tricked, as you know —" I stopped because he suddenly handed me a big red envelope containing a document bearing the state seal. It was a pardon from the prison sentence in California.

"At first I only hoped for a parole but I was pardoned," he said.

I suspected that he had tampered with all of the machines at the prison that day except the machine that was purchased from Coolidge, and I asked shortly:

"Why didn't you come to me for help instead of Coolidge?" With some heat I continued: "Trickery would not have been necessary in a fair test; my machine would have won over them all — and you know it!"

"I had to have the promise of some responsible firm to give me steady employment — as a condition of my release on parole," he said.

"Laura saw your name in the paper among the

names registered at the hotel and she telephoned to you, but you ignored the message."

"That's odd —" I began, and suddenly remembered the clerk handing me a memorandum of a telephone call the day I passed through the capital after my fruitless search for the Wards. "I remember it now," I said, "but I didn't know it was Laura's number. I hunted for the Wards and —"

He interrupted me, saying:

"Too bad! Laura thought you wanted to cut our acquaintance as I was a prize-fighter — and a convict." He turned to join Laura's cousin and added: "Laura knew my real name and that I was a divorced man. My wife was a successful singer and she divorced me some years ago. I had no secrets from Laura."

Kyralyi kept the conversation going until I left them. He told me why he would never box again; and he described how he could remember the impact when his victim's head struck the flooring, ending his last fight; the brutal shouts of the spectators, followed by a silently kneeling physician and the last dying gurgle of the corpse. He had no ill-feeling against his opponent and described him as a likeable man who had given him employment as his sparring-partner before he was matched against him by the promoters.

After his incarceration for manslaughter Coolidge was Laura's only neighbor or acquaintance

who was inclined to provide employment for Kyralyi if the Prison Board released him on parole. Coolidge agreed to hire him on condition that a machine of his presentation be a sure sale to the prison at the next competition. Coolidge proposed nothing wrong, but the temptation was there, so, through Laura's persuasion, Kyralyi tampered with all of the trial machines — with one exception. Coolidge sold that machine.

Kyralyi said he reasoned that the salesman would only lose the commission at the prison, and the machine could be readjusted and sold elsewhere. It was a small matter to the salesman, but it meant liberty and an opportunity to support his family while out on parole. The end justified the means, he thought.

Then I told him briefly what Melloni had told me of his marriage to Gabrielle Ghica and he added many particulars which Melloni could not know. But when I questioned him concerning his mother's family, he could only repeat what he had been told by the priest, Father Dabor. His grandfather was Baron Laszlo, an Austrian, who married Josephine Holcroft, an English woman, eldest daughter of Lord Holcroft. Two daughters, Marie and Blanche, were born to Baron Laszlo's wife. While the girls were quite young Josephine met Guillaume Champfleury, a French sculptor, and deserted her husband to flee with the sculptor. His own mother died after Stephen Kyralyi deserted her and Father Dabor was made

his guardian, as Baron Laszlo disappeared and was never heard of again. His daughter Marie also disappeared after she left the convent and Father Dabor had told him nothing more than that. When I told him that my mother was Marie Laszlo, he suggested that I write to Father Dabor, at Cetinje, Montenegro. I bade Kyralyi and his companion farewell, and they left the station.

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CHAPTER VII

FUTILE WOOING

Having arranged for my dies and castings, I returned to California and made my home temporarily with the Hucksteps. In the meanwhile I worked indefatigably at my invention with models, hoping that when these were completed, I should be able to establish myself permanently in San Francisco. But in spite of my activity, I advanced very slowly toward the realization of my long-deferred hopes.

I wrote to Father Dabor, but received no reply to my letter. How was I to lift the mystery from my ancestry, so as to nail the lies which Stephen Carroll had repeated to the father of Feodora Romanov?

My sleepless nights, my incessant toil, and above all, the feverish agitations resulting from all my emotions, had undermined my health. A brain-fever attacked me, and though I recovered from it, it was to pass five long months in listlessness and vacuity. My mind seemed quite gone: I felt no emotion, no love, no interest, even in the game of golf I had so delighted in; mechanical devices only existed for me in the shape of recollections.

But this illness, which had mastered the skill of Dick Dugdale, my physician, could not resist the refreshing air of the ranch, where I remained for six months with Meriwether Huckstep's foreman, Francois Touronet, until my health was restored. My recovery from a state of abject despondency was not rapid. I was as wretched as a man could be until I learned that Feodora had returned to her father's ranch near Mr. Huckstep's. Then my despair gradually faded away and made room for sorrow and resignation.

At last, as it is not my nature to keep up a melancholy character long, I ended by accepting the situation. Then the future, which had appeared so gloomy, assumed a different face when I learned that Feodora was still unmarried, and by a gradual process of reasoning I began to indulge in reflections whose consoling philosophy restored my courage.

Then came the day when I spoke to her again! I was leaving Sacramento in Aunt Eleanor's machine, and intended to make another trip to the Huckstep ranch to deliver some parcels to Francois Touronet, the foreman. I passed Dick's house and Charlotte asked me to leave a parcel at the Romanov ranch for Feodora. Truth extorts a confession from me. I immediately determined to boldly press my suit with Feodora when I received this parcel for her, and set out for the Romanov ranch at once, my heart leaping with sensations that thrilled me to the finger-tips.

As I approached the ranch, I saw her pretty face through the wistaria around the porch. She was reading. A gardener, seeing that I was entering the driveway, spoke to her, and she advanced at once to meet me, but very deliberately, with the same grace of movement I remembered so well when she was Charlotte's bridesmaid.

"How do you do, Miss Romanov," I said. "I am presumptuous in stopping, I know, since you so positively refused to see me again. Was I wrong in offering to deliver this parcel for Charlotte?"

She shook hands with me and smiled very charmingly.

"Not at all," she said, "since you come as a messenger from Charlotte. Won't you come to the house and meet my father?"

She gave me a glance of the slightest possible curiosity, for there was in my countenance something peculiar — a certain unbending will, declaring that I would withdraw before no man and no thing.

She accepted the chair I was holding as I spoke of my pumping device for the farm wells which I contemplated manufacturing.

"You will look at my engine models when you visit San Francisco?" I begged.

"Why, that will be delightful," she agreed. "I am so glad to go to the city with my father, Mr. Oyler," she continued. "I know he hates going

alone; and the San Francisco shops are so satisfactory for my shopping."

"Do you go to the city often?" I ventured.

"I shall go quite often," she replied. "You see it is not in the least entertaining where we are, and the nearby stores are abominable."

"I hope to find a suitable store on Market Street in which to set up my well machinery," I remarked.

She turned her head and looked at me. She had a trick of drooping her lids just a trifle, which was absolutely bewitching.

"I hope your business venture will be a success," she said.

I returned her regard steadfastly.

"Does your father still forbid your seeing me?" I asked.

She laughed merrily.

"Why should I care?" she said. "If you could only see some of the people he invites to dine with us!"

"Are they ranchers?"

"Mostly —" she said, "but always Europeans.

We talked for some time upon quite ordinary subjects after she told me that. I referred to the first time I saw her outside the spacious mansion of the Lamsdorffs when they lived in Berkeley, and teased her about her fright when she heard the automobile approaching her and clutched my hand.

She raised her eyebrows ever so slightly.

"You have grown bolder since I first met you in Doctor Dugdale's quarters in Los Angeles," she said.

"My social position is different now," I said, a little crossly. "Besides, I am older."

She smiled a little, and from that moment began to realize her interest in me, I afterwards learned.

"Dick Dugdale has told me that you are the red-haired lad who saved me from being burned to death," she said. "I did not know that until after they were married and settled in Sacramento. Why didn't you mention it?"

"Mr. Huckstep deserves the credit for that," I hastened to assure her. "He was badly burned."

She laughed very softly — almost under her breath; yet I fancied there was a note of mockery in her mirth.

"Charlotte insists that you are bashful," she said. "Perhaps it is only modesty."

I spoke of my hope of being permitted to see her occasionally, but she ignored the drift of my remarks. As the time passed on, however, and I made no move to leave, she became more silent. She told me very little about herself and the few personal things she said were always restrained. I was beginning to feel almost discouraged; she sat so long with a slight frown upon her forehead, and her head turned away from me.

"Miss Romanov," I ventured at last, "something seems to have displeased you."

"It has," she replied.

"Will you please tell me what it is?" I asked humbly. "If I have said or done anything awkward, give me a chance, at any rate, to let you know how sorry I am."

Then she turned and faced me.

"It is nothing you have done," she assured me; "only you must not call again."

"Why?"

"Because my father has forbidden it," she said. "I think," she went on, "it is perfectly delightful that I have met you again and nothing you have said offended me. It isn't that at all. My father's plans are very definite, and I have no right to allow you to believe that — that —"

"What do I believe?" I demanded. "Tell me, Miss Romanov — was Dick entirely sincere when he told me that your father has promised you to another?"

"Absolutely!"

"Am I, then, an intruder in asking to see you again?"

"Worse than an intruder — a meddler!" she told me.

A spell was upon me and I spoke quickly and earnestly.

"Then if you do not forbid it, I shall welcome an opportunity to play the meddler!" I declared.

"Why?" she murmured, looking at me wonderingly.

"Because I have never thought of any other

girl but you in all my life, and I cannot give you up so meekly until you say that you love this man whom your father has chosen for you. Even when I was a little toddler I used to wander away from my Aunt Eleanor and stand as if in a dream before the house where I had seen you, yearning to speak to you. Even as I speak to you now I am drawn to do so by an irresistible sympathy which I could not put out of my heart if I tried. It has always been so as long as I can remember. Do you know, Miss Romanov, that the first touch of your hand when you ran to me for protection from the automobile as a little girl awakened the first and only love I have ever known? When I rose to the surface of the water after being blown overboard by the explosion on the boat years ago, my return to you was not from intelligent choice — it was the instinct to protect you. Somehow, it has always seemed that God made us for each other. If you love some other man, then life does not hold anything else for me, and I shall go on loving you until the end of my days. No one has ever dreamed of this, but I had to tell you of this feeling that is wearing my heart away."

Then she was silent again, looking at me; and as I watched her eyes grow softer I suddenly held out my hand, and for a moment she allowed hers to remain in it. Then she withdrew it quickly. She was still gazing at me steadfastly; but something that had seemed to me unfavorable had gone from her look.

"Mr. Oyler," she said gently, "I think you are making a mistake to entertain such thoughts. You knew me less than a week in Los Angeles. My father has promised me to Mr. Stephen Carroll, his associate in extensive mining ventures in Mexico. We belong to a different class of society from yours. My father is a Russian and Mr. Carroll's name in Hungary is Kyralyi. In Russia, as well as in Hungary, it is customary for the parents to decide the future of a daughter. I am perfectly certain that you are the very highest type of gentleman — although Mr. Carroll has described you as a most unstable character, reckless and incompetent. I myself rather admire the venturesome, dare-devil type, but you can gain nothing by mixing with us."

I allowed her objections to pass unnoticed.

"May I not see you again?" I begged.

"I fear," she answered, looking me full in the face and smiling at me delightfully, "that you are very insistent."

"Supposing," I whispered, "it is because the villain in the melodrama is seeking to get the heroine in his power — if that knowledge led me to play the hero, do you blame me if for the sake of her own happiness and mine I am anxious to play the meddler?"

She held out her finger warningly. I heard Mr. Romanov approaching.

"Tell me," I said. "How can I gain your father's good-will?"

"You are a foolish man," she said.

"You will send some word to me?" I begged.

"My father is here," she murmured.

Ivan Romanov presented a physical exterior that indicated both sound health and years of ease. The red tinge in his cheeks served to modify the pink of his bald head, which was fringed with stiff hair—still black; but the pointed beard tapering his florid face was showing streaks of gray.

Yet his pampered appearance was not the result of idleness, as would be observed when he appeared in the orchards and fields of his ranch, where the broad and sturdily built Russian followed closely his business of farming in a greasy cap and blue overalls. He was much the same type as Stephen Carroll, who also wore a pointed beard.

"This is Mr. Oyler, father," she said—"my father Mr. Romanov. Are you fatigued, father?"

He shook hands with me and smiled very charmingly.

"Not at all," he said. "I find the use of a grubbing-hoe the most beneficial of exercises."

He gave me a second glance, as most men did; for I was considerably taller than most Russians, and my red hair was not streaked with gray as it is now.

I was about to leave. I had said more to Feodora than I had dared to hope she would allow me to say.

"I must be going," I said. "I came as the bearer of a parcel for your daughter."

Mr. Romanov turned toward the doorway; I gripped his hand.

When he disappeared into the house Miss Romanov walked out into the driveway with me.

"Good-bye," she said. She extended her hand to me. I held it for a second. The touch of her fingers gave me unreasonable pleasure.

"I have enjoyed our conversation tremendously," I assured her earnestly; "every moment of it. And I do hope, Miss Romanov," I hinted, "that you will find some way to enable me to be of service to you with the automobile before I go down to San Francisco."

"Thank you very much," she laughed, "but Mr. Carroll has warned my father of the life you led at the club. He would not trust me with a man who drinks highballs."

"But I do not drink!" I protested.

Then she nodded and turned away with a little shrug of her shoulders.

Several days passed. I was to remain a week with the foreman of the ranch.

Then a farm hand stopped to inquire for me. He was from the Romanov ranch. Miss Feodora wished to know when I would be passing again, as she wished to ask a service of me. I informed him that Touronet and I were going to town that afternoon and that we would pass at two o'clock.

I was riding up with Touronet when she saw

me from the porch, and tripped down the path to meet me as I jumped from the machine.

"I've been watching for you," said she, "to ask you to deliver an unusual passenger. It is a massive great Dane, sent to the ranch by Mr. Carroll. My father suggested asking you."

Of course I would be pleased to oblige her father was what she gathered from my enthusiastic assurances as she gave me the express order and hurried away.

It was not very definite encouragement, but I regarded the incident as favorable. I was to be allowed to serve her! My chest swelled with hope as I took the order from her. When I folded the paper and returned to the machine I beamed on Francois Touronet. He had been straining his ears to catch the conversation but he could not hear what Feodora said to me. Francois always wished to serve the ladies of the neighboring ranches.

"Comment?" Francois inquired, suddenly jealous. "Pour quoi you no me call over and introduce? It ess that what I want to know! S'eef any more conversations are going to be have wit' pretty girls, pour quoi I have no chance? Un loafer like you is assez bien here in ze machine. I know plus about this neighborhood than you do and I can tell her more of ze news in a minute than you ever knew in your life! What she wants to know?"

"Wanted to know if I would haul a passenger,"

said I, folding the express order away in my pocket. "I don't believe you would think well of the errand. You would decline with thanks if you knew what she wanted."

"Why?" said he. "Quel est le mystere! What is the joker?"

"Miss Romanov gave me the express order for a giant dog," I said. "He is at the depot now; she says he's a great Dane — whatever that is."

"Je connais l'animal!" jeered Francois. "I think I hollair before I be hurt! Jimmy, mon ami, you can have ze job! — and bonne chance to you. I rather not be here around! When it comes at zat what you call 'ze brass tacks' I can fight myself with ze other fellow; mais pas avec des brutes sauvages."

Francois looked very solemn; then he held up a forefinger to his face and laid it down slowly on a line parallel to his nose.

"Attendez!" he said, winking one eye. "Wait till you see this great Dane! It takes only some time and then! — un terrible finish pour le victim when the dog recommences to foam. I want to be far when it comes. He has a record terrible!"

"Are you sure this is the dog you mean," I asked, beginning to grow nervous.

"Certainement!" said Francois. "I saw him put on the baggage-car at Sacramento wiz ze ticket marked Miss Romanov. The baggage-smasher told me that they wrapped the crate in tarpaulins to keep the great Dane half smothered

— so he would not eat the slats off his box. He was halfway through them already!”

“What else is wrong?” said I. “Why didn’t she send her foreman with a wagon?”

“Eh bien,” said Francois diplomatically. “I would not like to say that he tried to get out of it; but I heard him tell to the ticket-agent that he was using all of the horses, parce que he had sense enough to know which side of his bread was buttered. Je ne sais pas what they were talking about, but he said anybody that wanted the job was the welcome one.”

“Is that girl willing to accept the care of such a brute after being warned that he is dangerous?” I said incredulously.

“She is not afraid of nothing, they say,” replied Francois.

“I’m not afraid of a dog,” I said — “even if he does get ugly. I can walk right up to any dog and make him cower.”

“Bulldogs and mastiffs, maybe,” sniffed Francois. “Diable! C’est different when you are trying to make the brave show before a great Dane. If she tell you to let him out of his crate! — then what? great Danes do not cringe! N’oubliez pas!”

“Well,” I said, “I don’t think the animal will be very lively after a tiresome trip in the baggage-car. I’m afraid he’ll be half dead,” I continued, concealing the fact that I hoped so. Then I thought of something and added: “Maybe I

ought to ask Miss Romanov to drive to the express office with me. Something might be wrong with him and she may not want him."

Francois tittered scornfully and said:

"You have no experience had with one great Dane; his mouth was covered with foam when I saw him. I would not like to buy for five dollars' worth of flowers for your coffin. I have need for my money and you ought to have some consideration for your friends before making some new business for the undertaker! . . . Ce sacré chien he act funny in Sacramento; and no one had the courage to give to him some food. Through the slats they tried to pour some milk in one big bucket in the crate but the more fast they fill the quicker he spill. Nom de Dieu! If she ask me to ride with that monster I would say 'No! Pas pour moi!' And you speak of taking the girl with you! The slats on that crate are going to undo themselves; the bottom will drop out and then! Parbleu!— and then somebody will be very busy. If you are thrown out of the car, the machine will go right up a tree with the girl!"

"Francois," I said, growing nervous, "are you trying to scare me?"

"Scare you! Pas du tout!" snorted Francois. "Only I try to warn; it is necessary that you know what a great Dane will do!"

When Francois left me, I hastened to the public telephone office and called Miss Romanov, suggesting that she might like to personally direct the

handling of the dog. I waited for her reply as the prisoner awaits his summons to execution. Perhaps she would misunderstand my motives! Ah! if I could only draw back! And yet, why did I feel this mad terror? I know not, for I could hear her now.

"I suppose I ought to go," she was saying, "but you must promise that you will not touch upon the subjects of our last conversation."

I made a final attack on my pusillanimity.

"Miss Romanov," I said, "please rest assured that I have no thought that does not harmonize with your wishes."

"That is my wish," she replied. "When shall we go?"

Her question restored me; I passed my hand several times over my agitated features and said:

"Whenever you are ready."

"Can you come by at eight in the morning?" came the voice.

"Yes."

"Then I shall expect you," she said. "Good-bye, and thank you very much for troubling."

To say that I was a proud figure when I strode back to the machine would be a proof of vanity, and yet it would be excusable, for my step was firm and my head high with exultation. Her friendly tone restored my confidence, and like a gentle dew refreshed my mind and senses. I may now confess it: I believed that I had been too timid, and that it was possible she reciprocated my love.

That afternoon I overhauled the machine, polished the tonneau and prepared to oil and test every part; and as I worked, I imagined myself riding swiftly along the hard, dry road with Feodora beside me.

The morning had at length arrived. To say how I spent it is impossible; all I remember is that at the end of a feverish and sleepless night occasioned by my anticipation of seeing her, I awoke before sunrise, for I wished to be assured that the machine was in perfect condition. What a terrible responsibility for an amateur chauffeur, whose life had hitherto been spent among adding-machines and golf-clubs! I filled the tank and started the engine; and the machine vibrated and shivered from the staccato of the powerful engine. Then I snapped into place the seat and door coverings to protect the cushions where I intended to put the great Dane; and I rigged up iron supports and clamps to hold the crate upright.

"Good morning," greeted Miss Romanov, as I made a spectacular swing round her house and brought the machine to a standstill at the porch. "I must wait for my gloves," she remarked. "You are early this cool morning."

Miss Feodora, hidden away in a big, tan auto coat and a flowing cerise veil, was more beautiful than ever. The blue eyes under the silk motor bonnet stole a quick look of appreciation at the iron rigging at the rear of the car, and I explained

that it was a special provision for hauling the dog securely.

Arrayed in a new overcoat bought for this occasion, I waited with her from a sheltered position, my shoulders screening her from a sharp wind, until the housekeeper brought Feodora's gloves. I asked her to occupy the front seat beside me, which she did, and the car was off with a leap.

I planned to conduct myself with scrupulous regard to my promise by allowing her to direct the conversation, but she looked straight ahead without breaking the silence.

After a while I made bold to speak, feeling that my position of host justified a limited amount of freedom.

"Your neighbor who was with me yesterday says he knows a great deal about great Danes," I said, referring to Francois Touronet. "He saw your dog in the transfer-sheds at Sacramento."

Feodora favored me with a quick glance and smiled.

"He is said to be a fine specimen; are you afraid of great Danes? My experience with dogs has been acquired in the chariest manner," she said, without waiting for me to comment on the question she had put.

"I'll tie him up for you," I said patronizingly; "then you can make friends with him gradually."

"My father is away," said the girl; she glanced at my new overcoat and viewed me with an ap-

praising eye. "I thought you would be willing to oblige me in his absence."

"I should hope so," I said, and we both laughed merrily. The camaraderie encouraged me to make my next sally. "Aunt Eleanor says you don't speak to Mr. Carroll," I hazarded.

Feodora made no answer. She seemed to be surveying the sky-line. As I persisted, my heart was hammering and my voice trembled:

"It's hard to remain silent — knowing what I do about Stephen Kyralyi!" I wondered at my own intrepidity.

"I hope it doesn't rain before we return," countered Miss Romanov irrelevantly, with another entrancing smile.

"Charlotte must have mentioned Dick's experience," I persevered.

"Ah indeed!" The elevated brows and mock surprise warned me that it was time to change the subject.

"Now you are provoked," I said penitently; "but I promise not to offend again! . . . Let's talk about the dog. Of course you want me to turn him out of his box and feed him when we return to the ranch."

No dilettante sportsman was I! — so I rattled it off with the coolness of a bench-show judge.

"I suppose so," she faltered. "His name is Todor. Father promised to keep him for the rest of his days."

And Feodora would come out and stroke his head every day!

"Lucky dog!" I muttered; but she didn't hear me.

I gazed at the sky as we rode along a familiar stretch of road. I passed this spot the night before to try the machine, and gazed at Charles's Wain and anticipated the morning; this was realization! I expelled a tremendous sigh and said:

"This is my first joy-ride with a young lady."

"I've heard that sort of bourgeois before," said Feodora.

"That was not 'booshwaw'!" I gushed. There was a little catch in my voice when I added: "You know I've never cared for any other girl."

While I was vaguely intimating to Miss Romanov the sentiment that was so intense in my heart, Francois Touronet had preceded me to the express office that morning, and managed to gain access to the wareroom. Under his arm he carried a tin of fleecy soap-lather.

His first precaution had been to evade the vigilance of the agent; then he had used his soapsuds and covered Todor's crate with tarpaulin, neatly tacking the heavy canvas around the sides and top — after loosening the slats. He was loitering on the platform when I drove up.

"Will you give me a hand, Francois?" the agent asked, sticking the express receipt into his cap. They disappeared into the wareroom.

"All right, Francois!" said the agent briskly when the crate had been trundled to the edge of the platform. "Keep your seat, Mr. Oyler — you might soil your new overcoat! . . . Here you — Francois! Put the end nearest you between those clamps when your end is high enough. Now! Lift from the bottom! . . . So! Here is a fountain-pen, Miss Romanov — sign the receipt, please! . . . Thanks! Go ahead, Mr. Oyler!"

The engine throbbed and I saw the crate settle securely between the clamps. I looked back at it again, and saw Francois Touronet grinning like a Cheshire cat.

"If he's dead, he'd have to be buried anyway," I said; "so we need not bother about him until we reach the ranch."

"I suppose not," Feodora replied uncertainly.

I leaned back in the cushioned seat with a contented sigh, thinking of Francois; I was glad he had been there to witness my indifference to the dangerous great Dane he had described.

Miss Romanov had all her wits about her when Todor was heard to whine. I watched the crate as the machine rolled along. The loading had been accomplished without incident; now there was an occasional violent disturbance under the canvas cover and Miss Romanov would start nervously.

"I haven't the slightest idea how he makes that commotion," she said anxiously. "I can't help feeling that something is wrong; perhaps a slat is

broken. If he should get out, you couldn't hold him. He isn't muzzled, either!"

Todor had never heard the purring of an automobile before. To his inexperienced brain it was a thing to be shunned. The swaying of the car would have caused a less spirited dog to prick up his ears.

I opened the throttle to allow a larger volume of gas to pass into the main in-take. Obedient to my forward movement of the spark lever, the machine trembled and vibrated until I threw the gear-shift lever to the high-speed. Instantly the car leaped forward along the hard, dry road, swinging tortuously from left to right as I manipulated the steering-wheel to avoid the chuck-holes.

Feodora gave a little startled cry at the bang! bang! of the exhaust.

"Don't be afraid!" I said impetuously. "I'm here!"

"The dog! — I'm so alarmed," said my frightened companion.

Even as she spoke the canvas was ripped from the top of the crate; a slate-colored streak shot out of the coop and over the back of the car.

When I turned to see what had happened the careening car struck a chuck-hole, throwing Feodora out of the seat. She clung desperately to the rod in front of her with one hand and I felt the tug of her little hand on my arm for a brief moment as she recovered her balance. The car lurched again and Feodora screamed. I threw off

the engine and bore all my weight on the foot-brake; the danger was over.

But during the interval when Todor had leaped from the car and the machine swerved, the muffler of the engine had blown its head off. As the wheels skidded across the hot, dry road, a tire had exploded from the friction.

I looked around at Feodora; she was huddled against the big, cushioned seat where she had collapsed in a state of hysteria when the tire blew out.

My next thought was of the dog. I looked back, for I could hear the rattle of his enormous collar. His entire head was white with foam and his fiery tongue lolled between his great jaws; his tail swung threateningly as he leaped along; it seemed that the next bound would bring him down upon us.

I scratched around under the seat for a pistol which I kept in the tool-kit to use in the event of a hold-up at night. When I found it and stood up in the machine, Todor's sinewy limbs were bent as though for a spring into the car. I emptied a six-shooter into him as fast as I could pull the trigger, and Todor collapsed into his last sleep.

Instantly I was down in the road examining him.

"He is quite dead!" I cried in stentorian tones. "He had rabies!" I added. I was excited.

The foam began to look oddly familiar and I could smell soap. Then I tried it with my finger and immediately suspected Francois Tournet. I knew what he had done to me when I discovered

that the slats had been unfastened and merely tacked together again.

While I was discovering that the poor old brute had lost all of his teeth (the reason they fed him buckets of milk at Sacramento), I heard the honk-honk! of an approaching auto.

Francois Touronet had hired a roadster and followed close behind us, awaiting the outcome of his knavery. When he arrived and inquired as to the trouble, Miss Romanov explained volubly in French.

I was too angry to speak.

I can understand French when it is used in ordinary, civilized conversation; but when a hysterical Russian girl and an excited Frenchman jabber patois at each other, it is too much for me.

While I was trying to right the car I saw the Frenchman assist Miss Romanov into his roadster. She turned her back on me and did not deign to speak to me again. I was too incensed to attempt any explanation then. Presently the lady and the Frenchman disappeared in a cloud of dust.

After a difficult process of jacking the machine up I got a new tire on the broken-down wheel and rode slowly back to town. There was only one garage in the little town.

Two hours later I was mournfully watching the machinists working at the car, when Dick Dugdale dropped in on us.

"How about it, Jimmy?" said he. "Francois

says you had an accident with Miss Romanov; does she blame you? ”

I nodded. Then after a pause:

“What did he tell you? ”

“Francois brought Miss Romanov home,” said Dick. “He only knows what she told him. He says you shot a poor, old, toothless pet that wouldn’t harm a mouse if he could.”

“He alarmed me,” I growled. “Yesterday afternoon he said he knew of this dog — that he was dangerous. He said he saw him eating his way through the wooden slats. No wonder I got excited! I thought I was risking hydrophobia to protect her.”

“Francois played a foolish trick,” agreed Dick. “Miss Romanov says you evaded her questions, though. Why didn’t you tell her you didn’t know a great Dane from a Chihuahua pup? ”

“We didn’t discuss Chihuahua pups,” I answered, after a silence.

“What had you planned to do if the tire hadn’t exploded? ” teased Dick; “race it out with the ki-yi? ”

I allowed the question to pass unnoticed.

“How is Miss Romanov? ” I inquired.

“Scared into hysterics — the Frenchman says,” Dick replied.

I strode over to the office of the garage and asked for my bill. I was too angry to trust myself to discuss the affair with Dick at the moment. He followed me and said:

"She says you became excited and tried to ditch the car. She said, too, that she had been warned against a man who drinks highballs."

"Does she think I was drunk after the way I risked my life?" I demanded.

"That's what Francois says," observed Dick, preparing to depart with the car. "She said the dog belonged to Mr. Carroll, her fiancé, and she hoped her sweetheart wouldn't learn of her adventure with this play-actor."

"Sweetheart! . . . She called him that!" I said sorrowfully. "And I risked hydrophobia — to be called a play-actor!"

"Too bad!" said Dick, sympathizing. "You've just paid the repair bill and bought a new tire. What does Feodora lose? Nothing — but the care of Carroll's broken-down, toothless, old dog."

We pushed the machine out to the curb and were about to enter it when my eyes bulged for a minute. Francois was approaching. I paused and heaved a deep, happy sigh.

"You cautioned me well, Francois," I said, smiling for the first time since the accident. "Here is my acknowledgment!"

Biff!

My right arm is rather powerful. It shot out and landed a hard fist under Francois's eye. He swayed for a second, admiring the constellation, before he collapsed in a limp heap.

Dick was already in the machine at the curb.



and as I entered the car and slammed the door, Francois rose to a sitting posture.

"Tiens!" he muttered, rubbing his eye ruefully. "It was worth the punishment!"

Dick and I returned to Sacramento and I left him to visit the Hucksteps, prior to my departure for San Francisco. Although Mr. Huckstep would have been inclined to overlook Francois Tournet's trick as the unfortunate dénouement of mere mischief, he could not condone the malicious falsehoods concerning Feodora's report of the accident. As she repudiated his statements when Charlotte visited her, Mr. Huckstep dismissed Francois from his service and engaged another foreman, who gave a name which I do not now recall.

He had the recommendation of Ivan Romanov who, Mr. Huckstep informed me, knew that the man was descended from an Austrian nobleman. Imagine my astonishment when I visited the ranch and found Janos Kyralyi in charge. He begged me to keep his history secret, and believing, as I firmly did, that this man was my first cousin, I agreed to thus befriend him — especially because he appealed to my sympathy by mentioning the loss of Laura's baby.

He also informed me that his first wife, Gabrielle Ghica, was not opposed to a reconciliation, and that she was now singing in America and due to arrive in California shortly.

One piece of information never arrives without another; thus, after I had established a flourishing business in San Francisco, I learned of Gabrielle Ghica's acquaintance with Stephen Carroll.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MASQUERADER

My story begins in the Sacramento Valley. The business required my attention in San Francisco and necessitated my employing travelers, one of whom was named Rutledge. He was well acquainted in the section around the little town where he was staying at the hotel.

Rutledge sat in the office and read until the hacks arrived with the passengers from the San Francisco train. The "local" was in from the junction and on it came a heavy-set, bearded man, who stepped up to the desk. Rutledge strolled over when he saw the man enter, and slapped him vigorously on the back.

"How are you, Mr. Romanov?" he said, reaching out his hand.

"Glad to see you, sir — but my name is Carroll," roared the stranger, turning around — vanity and ostentation manifest in his every movement; but he shook hands freely and cordially like a generous person. His eyes twinkled and the laugh that shook his sides was generous and hearty.

Rutledge shook hands with equal readiness — and some embarrassment when he discovered his mistake.

"My name is Rutledge," he said, "and I apologize for my familiarity."

"Oh, that is all right!" Carroll replied, in stentorian tones. "I came up to visit Romanov. We are somewhat alike in general appearance, which accounts for your mistake. Coincidence — is it not?"

"I heard Mr. Romanov speak of you once," said Rutledge. "You had an engagement to dine with him and his daughter in San Francisco."

A waitress passed the door with a tray of dishes as Rutledge finished his remark.

Carroll pondered a moment and then recalled the occasion when last he dined with Ivan Romanov in San Francisco.

"Sure!" he boomed, the crash of his voice so startling the waitress that her frightened cry was mingled with the rattle of breaking china; but Carroll went on serenely: "Romanov dined with me, but his daughter had other errands and she did not join us."

The clerk relieved him of a suitcase and a flowing ulster and led the way upstairs.

Although Carroll's walk was artificial and his whole make-up a collection of affectations, he had the manner of a generous, whole-souled and resolute character.

"I'm a mining man and I've just returned from

Mexico," he was saying, as he paused halfway up the stairs. "I'd like to explain something about it later; you will find it interesting."

"I warn you I am not an investor," said Rutledge, seeking to escape a stock-salesman's importunities.

"Tra — la — loo!" yawped Carroll, disappearing.

"Au revoir, Mr. Carroll!" returned Rutledge. "By the way," he added, suddenly remembering, "I've just returned from Romanov's — if you plan to go there soon. He is away."

"I am glad you mentioned it," Carroll bellowed from the head of the stairs. The stairway creaked under his descending weight as he continued: "I'll catch the Sacramento train and see Romanov on my way back. I am much obliged to you for mentioning his absence."

"You're welcome!" cried Rutledge, as Carroll hurried out of the door and struck off toward the depot.

The clerk closed the door and returned to his desk, observing:

"Carroll always has this hotel in an uproar whenever he stops with us."

"What's his graft?" Rutledge inquired, suiting his choice of words to the clerk's manner of speech.

"President of a California corporation with swell offices in San Francisco. He divides his time between California and Mexico — where he operates valuable mining concessions. He sells

stock to the farmers around here — especially the foreigners.”

Stephen Carroll, president of the Sierra Madre Gold Mining Company of Altata, Culiacan and Imala, and a person of considerable importance in the Mexican mining industry — which is rather a large industry when you give it a moment's reflection — arranged to visit the California stockholders in person as soon as he was advised that the options had been secured on some properties which promised a golden harvest if the stockholders could be induced to finance their development.

Carroll was the sort of linguist who could confidently converse with the capitalists and investors of many nationalities, slap them on the back, and invite them to purchase stock in his mining projects; but he thought it necessary to be particular about all the nice deferences with the beautiful and talented Philomela,—“Philomela, the Zagrab Hour,”—she was billed on the posters displayed in the foyer of the Coliseum in Sacramento, where she was advertised to sing that week.

After annoying the clerk at the ticket office for half an hour, Carroll succeeded in getting a card to the watchman entitling him to entrance at the stage door. Philomela was already a holder of shares in the Sierra Gold Mining Company, he remembered, and every stockholder was to Carroll a prospect for the sale of more stock. Philomela did not know Carroll's history, but he knew her

for Gabrielle Ghica, the girl who was his daughter-in-law, having been informed of her marriage to Janos Kyrallyi, his son. Father Dabor had long since written to Carroll, demanding that he do something toward assisting his son Janos. But this, it is needless to say, Carroll had not done, as he was too cowardly to face the wrath of his son.

When Carroll saw her posters displayed he resolved to give her a canvass; she made big money and could afford to invest further. The watchman directed him to her door, which was slightly ajar; she held Carroll's note in her pink fingers.

"You will excuse me, Miss Philomela, but I have so little time in Sacramento — and, of course, I wanted to see you in connection with the mining company in which you are a shareholder."

Philomela smiled grimly.

"Oh, don't apologize for a little thing like keeping an audience of ticket-holders waiting. You see, I'm only the artist they have paid to hear. They have no right to expect me to be on time!" The beautiful contralto shot a withering glance at him, but Carroll was case-hardened.

"Oh, come now; don't be provoked with me," he said, preparing to spout his famous canvass at her. "Let us talk about the business for a few moments only. As an investment, the stock certificate is taking the place of a life insurance policy. I presume that you have read our prospectus which was mailed to all of the stockholders,

and I hope you appreciate the value of the options we have secured."

"No," said Philomela dryly; "I haven't thought very much about your options. The question is — can you assure me that the stock I now own is worth what I paid for it?"

Stephen Carroll threw out his chest and raised his hand languidly. The pose indicated supreme pride.

"You bought dollar-par stock for fifty-cents a share; I can sell it for you today at seventy-five — a profit of fifty per cent," he added, with a patronizing smile.

"That is good news," said Philomela, "but I can't talk now! Wait for my 'phone message after the performance."

"I am registered at the big hotel which is five minutes' walk from here," replied Carroll.

"I've become a baseball crank; you'll have to explain the investment while we watch the ball-game," was her unexpected reply. "I finish my number at three o'clock; then I will drive by for you and you can motor out to the ball-park with me, thus economizing your time and mine."

Carroll smirked. Women often glanced a second time at the dapper financier.

"Well," he said, "I don't understand baseball — but I'm a good sport; and I'll try anything just once."

The lady frowned.

"See here!" she flamed. "When I offered to

listen to your spiel I did so because the investment in your company has been paying satisfactory dividends — but that is my only reason for listening to you! If I didn't believe that you came on business I'd have you thrown out of here. I don't want to hurt your feelings but if you can do it without injuring yourself, I advise you to dispense with that silly smirk! What do you think you are — a lady-killer? And another thing! The next time you want to see me, don't come to the theatre! Do you get that?"

"Again I beg pardon," said the suave Carroll. "In view of the fact that this is my first offense, I hope you will dismiss the matter. Here is my card for your chauffeur. If he will present it at the hotel I will be waiting to accompany you to the ball-game at three o'clock."

Philomela watched the distinguished looking foreigner step quickly down the passage and out into the street.

"He reminds me of someone," she muttered, "but who — who?"

Stephen Carroll was of a squat, muscular figure and carried his years like a much younger man. His black beard showed but slight traces of gray; a green fedora hat with a bow at the back covered a very decidedly bald head; and a nifty checked suit completed his fashionable attire from gloves to shoes. His appointment with Philomela was doubly gratifying to him because she was a gorgeous creature to behold — and Carroll was vain.

Carroll hastened to Pat Gleason's cigar-stand; he read the name over the cigar-stand and with customary adaptability addressed the man familiarly.

"Pat," he said, "I'm from Mexico; they don't play any baseball at the mines and the only game I understand is golf. When I'm in California I never attend the ball-games — don't understand it. I'd like to know something about it this afternoon; I'm going with a lady." He smiled ingratiatingly. "What do you advise?"

There was a moment of silence; Pat was searching through some pamphlets. Carroll rolled a cigarette and waited while the man dug out a booklet from the bottom of his case.

"Well," said Pat skeptically, "you may get some of the dope from this booklet — and you may not! It's supposed to be funny. The price won't set you back much — if it's no good — ten cents. Thanks!" as Carroll departed with the little classic.

It was a grand day for a ball-game. The Oaks and the Seals were to play that afternoon. Stephen Carroll did not know that the rivalry between Oakland and the big city across the bay was intense. He only knew that the bystanders gaped at the beautiful Philomela when he stepped into her car. He recalled the technical terms of baseball from his booklet with a mental struggle to retain them. But, and craft appeared in the eyes

of the president of the Sierra Madre Gold Mining Company, he would give her his famous canvass, sell some stock, and depart for the Romanov ranch — after securing her signature on the dotted line of one of his stock-subscription blanks.

"I hope we are not late," Philomela said, as he slammed the door. "Let us hurry."

"I have reserved the seats," replied the enchanted Carroll. "The game does not begin until four o'clock today; so we have plenty of time."

"But I like to see them warming up," urged Philomela.

"Warming up what?" inquired Carroll.

He detected a shade of either annoyance or astonishment in the melodious answer:

"That is the term applied to the preliminary practice before the bell is rung."

"Oh!" said Carroll. "You see, I'm not up on the game; so I bought a treatise on baseball. It has a very alliterative title — 'Baseball Bingles, By Bunter' — and it's very technical."

As he assisted her up the stairway to the grandstand, he procured programmes and a couple of cushions — the least weather-beaten of the exhibit.

"Here you are, sir! First two on the aisle, sir!" announced the usher and hurried away.

"However did you know?" smiled the lovely Philomela. "These are my favorite seats behind first base! The sun is behind us; so we can see the fielding — and the boots, too," she laughed.

"Are their boots particularly attractive?" asked Carroll.

"They are not!" Philomela turned and surveyed her companion. "They wear spiked shoes," she explained patiently. "A boot is a fumble; an error; a poor piece of fielding!"

"Oh!" said Carroll hastily, stealthily fingering the book in his pocket.

An athletic man with red side-whiskers, massive shoulders and a bald head was adjusting a mask. The catcher was strapping down his pneumatic chest-protector and shin-guards. Carroll resolved to begin his canvass.

"I hope to interest you to the extent of some thousands of dollars," he began. "This investment may lift you beyond the necessity of further singing —"

Philomela laid a gloved hand on Carroll's arm.

"The batteries," she murmured.

An announcer removed his hat and raised his hand, requesting attention.

"L-l-ladies 'n' gen'l'men!" he bawled: "Batteries; San Francisco, Leifield and Clark! — Oakland, Killilay and Mitze!"

The bell rang and the Oaks, in white uniforms, trotted to their positions on the diamond.

"The Seals are up," Philomela observed.

"Up?" echoed Carroll, puzzled.

"Mr. Carroll," responded the lady tolerantly, "the Seals are the men in blue, and they will bat first."

Philomela studied the batting order.

Carroll continued his canvass:

"As I was saying, when you buy shares in our corporation —"

"Strike — uh!" shouted the athletic man as the catcher received the ball. His right arm was raised as he hopped nimbly about a shiny white slab which he dusted vigorously with his cap while the crowd yelled, "Robber" and "Boo."

"What did he say?" inquired Carroll.

"Strike," answered Philomela succinctly.

"But he did not strike at it," protested her companion.

She vouchsafed no response and Carroll, losing interest quickly, returned to his canvass:

"Permit me to return to my subject. When you place your money —"

"Ball one!" shouted the red-whiskered man, as the pitcher hurled the ball past the batter and the catcher returned it to him.

This time the athletic man raised his left arm; then, with both arms elevated,

"One and —!" he said.

Stepping back, with one foot toeing a mark, the pitcher wound him arm round and round; then he shot the ball across the shiny plate, where the batter met it with a whack; causing the ball to rise high in the air as the batter ran past the first base and on to the second. There was an uproar among the spectators until a player in a white uniform on the left side of the diamond caught the

ball as it descended; the runner returned to his seat.

"He's out," said Philomela. "Hard luck for Mundy; McArdle's up next."

"Batter up!" ordered the red-haired man.

The next Seal made no effort to hit the first ball thrown and it was called a ball by the umpire. The next one was also a ball. Then the batter struck and missed a pitched ball that curved around the plate. A ball was batted into the bleachers among the spectators and the umpire shouted,

"Foul!—Strike two."

Then he adjusted a small white indicator he held in his hand.

"I guess he'll fan McArdle," said the girl.

A ball sped swiftly across the plate.

"Strike three!—batter up!" said the man, and the batter returned to his seat.

It was canvassing under difficulties, but Carroll was a real stock-salesman. He continued:

"Look at the successful and wealthy people about you. When they were young they saved money, and invested it where the returns were largest and conditions safest. In a few years—"

"Oh, you Jimmy!" came the cries from all around the grand-stand. Another man faced the pitcher. He was short, active, nervously alert.

Philomela leaned forward, her eyes flashing.

"It's Johnston, the center-fielder," she said.

He's about fifty per cent of the San Francisco team, they say!"

Carroll did not dare to breathe; Philomela had grasped his arm, half rising from her seat.

"It's a hit! a hit!" she cried. The melodious voice was almost shrill. She clapped her hands gleefully. "He's safe!" she chortled.

Killilay in the pitcher's box watched the man as he darted back and forth — twenty feet from the base — then back to it.

"He's going to steal when he pitches," panted Philomela, grasping Carroll's arm again.

The pitcher swung his arm and Johnston sped toward second base.

"Run! run! run! — Jimmy!" shrilled Philomela. "Mitze's going to throw it! — E-e-e-e! — Slide! Jimmy — slide!"

"He's out," she said. Philomela sank back in her seat, a crushed heap of apologizing misery. "And he holds the record for more stolen bases than any man in the Coast League," she sighed.

The Oaks went to their benches; the Seals scattered to their positions and Carroll returned to his stock presentation.

"The banker invests your dollars, pockets the earnings and gives you four per cent. Why not do your own investing and have the profits for yourself? This is your opportunity, Miss Philomela; make the best of it."

Carroll had his fountain pen ready, and a combination sight draft and stock-subscription form.

"Shall we say two thousand more — as before?" he queried, offering his pen.

"If you offer to buy what I have I think I'll take some more," said Philomela, removing her glove and accepting the golden pen.

Whether or no she signed her stage name, or some other on this occasion is not known; but Philomela's written order for the stock was satisfactory to Stephen Carroll.

The president of the Sierra Madre Gold Mining Company rose, and bowing, regretted that an engagement at the ranch of Ivan Romanov, another heavy stockholder, made his immediate departure from the ball-ground imperative. Was Miss Feodora Romanov an acquaintance of Philomela's? Ah, indeed! And Madame Lamsdorff, with whom Feodora had lived much of her life, was the aunt of the fair Philomela? How interesting! Mr. Carroll would be pleased to convey her remembrances to Miss Feodora. Perhaps on the occasion of his next meeting with Philomela, he would understand more of baseball. He patted his "Baseball Bingles, By Bunter" significantly. Mr. Carroll shook hands, lifted his green hat with the bow at the back, and was gone.

The lady enjoyed the remainder of the game undisturbed by his canvass.

It was shortly after eleven on the following morning when the conductor on the Sacramento Flyer — bound for San Francisco — pulled out of

Dixon. There was a sound of hot steam and the wheels had begun to turn when a tardy passenger swung himself up the step with one hand on the rail.

Philomela had finished her engagement in Sacramento; she was on her way to San Francisco. The tardy passenger entered the coach in which she was seated and sought a seat with his eyes. He found them staring at a fashionably attired young lady who was smiling and motioning him to a seat beside her.

Instead of accepting the invitation to join her, the man stared past her; there was no recognition in his eyes; he pulled his green fedora hat low over his eyes, the bow at the back sticking out awkwardly, and sank into a seat. A flowing ulster covered a nifty, gray checked suit, into which he buried a black beard, slightly gray.

As Philomela cautiously but curiously peered under the rim of Stephen Carroll's green hat, the man's neck, buried in his capacious collar, was all she could see. Philomela gave a start. Had anyone, up to this very instant, asked her if she had observed anything peculiar or erratic in Carroll's actions the afternoon before, she would have replied that to her certain knowledge the mining promoter was a most practical, sane and optimistic business man. She decided that Carroll was under the influence of liquor and hardly a fit person to handle her investment of the afternoon before. She resolved to decline the draft she had

signed when the bank notified her at her San Francisco address. Having reached this decision, she dismissed the matter from her mind.

When a young lady is traveling alone she does not ask questions, but accepts everything at its face value.

There was, for instance, the insolent stare of a gigantic creature of the sportive, blonde type, who had stalked through the car three times, compelling her to lower her eyes on each occasion. He was passing up the aisle again with big strides, his hat tilted back, displaying a bristling pompadour.

Another event which gave the bearded man a shock was the heavy hand of the big man on his shoulder; he looked up into a pair of cynical, gray-blue eyes and caught the flash of a silver star under his coat.

"Where are you from?" asked the officer harshly.

For answer, the trembling man passed him a batch of papers from his inside pocket.

"Stephen Carroll, President, The Sierra Madre Gold Mining Company, eh," read the officer.

The sleuth regarded him skeptically.

"I think your name is Rogers — wanted for smuggling Hindoos into California!" he sneered. "Come into the front car and no monkey-business, either!"

They went forward together, the officer shoving him along roughly.

The conductor admitted them to the baggage-

car, where they squared off, glaring at each other. Then the conductor was summoned by Philomela, and questioned concerning the action of the officer.

He explained that four Hindoos had been arrested at Vallejo, together with a Chinaman who was held with the Hindoos on a charge of smuggling. All were being held for examination before immigration officers. The Hindoos claimed that they were to pay Rogers, an American, one hundred dollars for bringing them into the State and finding employment for them in the orchards.

"But that is not Rogers," cried Philomela.

"Shall I report what you say to the officer?" asked the conductor.

"Oh, no! Please don't say any more about it," she protested. "I am a public singer, and the papers would immediately seize upon the incident."

"Certainly not," returned the conductor. "But I can say to the officer that I know his name if a wrong is about to be done. What is his name?"

"Stephen Carroll, president of the Sierra Madre Gold Mining Company," she told him.

The conductor retraced his steps.

Meanwhile the sleuth was searching his prisoner.

"Well," growled the prisoner sullenly, "what do you want?"

"You boarded the train at Dixon—I know that! You were not on the train before we stopped. I believe you are Rogers who finds jobs

for smuggled Hindoos," he said, watching his man narrowly.

The face of the other lighted up; his voice was strained — yet it was almost eager.

"I am leaving for the mines by steamer if I can get a launch in time at Vallejo to take me out into the bay."

He drew a wallet from his pocket and counted twenty-five twenty-dollar gold pieces into the palm of his hand — five hundred dollars — and handed the money to the sleuth.

Just then the conductor entered and identified the stranger as Stephen Carroll. The officer pointed to the door, and the man returned to his seat by the window, stroking his black beard thoughtfully.

Philomela watched for the big, blonde man to pass through the car, but he failed to appear again.

At Vallejo the bearded man stepped off the train without glancing back. The sleuth followed him until they drew near to one of the government buildings, when he tapped his shoulder and asked him to accompany him into one of the offices. Here they compared him with a photograph of Rogers and found that he was not the man. Presently he stepped into the street, where he was again confronted by the man to whom he had given his five hundred dollars.

"You may need this," said the sleuth, proffer-

ing the money; "so I wish to return it. Much obliged for the loan!"

"But — but — keep it anyway," urged the man who had been his prisoner.

"Why?"

"I am in haste and do not wish to be annoyed."

"You won't be detained," said the officer; "but I ought to punch your head for trying to bribe me. Go catch your boat — and don't come back!"

The sleuth strode into the building, looking back to scowl at the figure in the long ulster, with gray checked trousers flapping below it, a green felt hat topping the bald head.

The other buried his neck in his capacious collar and struck off in the direction of the wharf.

Now it becomes my duty to go back and begin this story of the tardy passenger — at the Romanov ranch where, properly, it ought to begin. Otherwise, I fear these things I relate of Stephen Carroll may not be credited. I shall put them down in all sincerity.

Although Ivan Romanov was a wealthy man, farming was not merely an occupation to him; it was an art. He had a habit of suggesting innovations for the adjacent ranches, and of winking gravely to himself and adopting such as were suited to his own requirements.

Unbeknown to his neighbor, Romanov had long contemplated the installation of pumps for irri-

gating his alfalfa, incidentally mentioning the advantages of well-water irrigation to his neighbor.

The neighbor, who investigated the wells in the neighborhood, found the water of good quality. The water on the adjacent lands was satisfactory; it came within forty feet of the surface. The well-water put on the neighboring lands came up clean from the ground; it did not carry a pest of weeds to foul the fields as stream water often does; great depths did not have to be pierced to get sufficient water. My type of pump was a success in that section!

Now it happened that the neighbor had made his investigations and then written to me. An inquiry is a live prospect for the sale of a pump. Rutledge had installed my machines throughout the section and my invention was well known. I immediately wrote in response to this inquiry, advising that Rutledge and I would call on the morning of August the fifteenth.

I have mentioned these particulars, because it both proves the popularity my invention enjoyed at that time, and reminds me of an occurrence which enabled me to prove my loyalty to the only woman I ever loved in my life.

Ivan Romanov leaned over his neighbor's fence on that morning and learned that he expected a manufacturer of well machinery. He commended him for his enterprise while they watched an approaching automobile. When the machine stopped the neighbor stared curiously and then

returned to his work; it was Stephen Carroll, just arrived from Sacramento.

The man who jumped out of the car and greeted Romanov was a squat, muscular, fashionably-attired business man who spoke in a foreign tongue. He dismissed the chauffeur after paying his fare, and the car rumbled off toward Dixon. They crossed the porch and entered Romanov's study which he used as an office, both jabbering and stroking their black beards.

The lean, saturnine neighbor remarked the youthful attire of the visitor, snickered silently at the prosperously checked suit, the green fedora with the bow at the back — and passed out of sight behind his house.

Romanov found the house deserted and returned to his guest, who was explaining his projects.

"A month ago," said Romanov, seating himself, "I would have considered an additional investment; but it is impossible now."

"Do you prefer Meriwether Huckstep's advice to mine?" asked Carroll, looking hurt. "His advice to put your money into his bank, or the warning that but five per cent only can be earned on money invested with safety, is simply another way of stating the disagreeable fact that your advisor has his own opinion of your ability or shrewdness which, summed up in a few words, is to the effect that you need a guardian in the disposition of —"

"You went over the same arguments the last time you called," interrupted Romanov, his eyes

twinkling; "but this time it's no use urging me. I'm going abroad with my daughter. I drew two thousand dollars yesterday — all I have in ready cash — to pay our expenses."

"What do you mean, Romanov?" asked Carroll sharply. "As Feodora is my fiancée, don't you think this news of a trip to Europe is rather sudden?"

The two men faced each other, silently staring for a moment; then Carroll dropped his eyes.

"It is rather sudden," said Romanov finally. "Feodora has flatly refused to marry you, defying me, and threatening to go alone if I refuse to accompany her to Europe."

Carroll bethought himself.

"That red-headed Oyler has been lying to her," he snarled.

Romanov regarded him coldly.

"Oyler knows the grandson of Baron Laszlo," he said slowly. "His name is Janos Kyrallyi, and he says his father deserted his mother. Janos is a dangerous man and it would not be safe for his father to meet up with him. If you are his father, as Oyler says you are, I can warn you that Janos is employed within a stone's throw of my ranch and comes through my place almost daily. Look out for him! . . . Oyler also showed me a photograph of your daughter-in-law, and asked me to see her in San Francisco. Here is the picture!"

Carroll recognized the slumbrous dark eyes and jetty, waving hair of Philomela. An inscription

read: "To my erstwhile contemporary, Jimmy, from Gabrielle." The likeness was very lovely.

"I know her as one of our stockholders," said Carroll momentarily. "I mailed her sight draft for two thousand dollars to my home office last night. It is the famous Philomela, the Zagrab Hour; these photographs are for sale all over the country. This Oyler scoundrel probably bought one and wrote that inscription himself."

Romanov ignored his irrelevancy, shrugged his shoulders and said:

"Feodora has made her decision, and so far as I am concerned the incident is closed!"

Carroll arose from his chair, returned the photograph and stood for a moment, thinking deeply.

"Very well!" he said, turning toward the desk.

"May I write some letters?" he asked, pausing.

"I won't disturb your papers," he added, as Romanov placed pen and paper before him.

"Make yourself comfortable," said Romanov.

"I won't disturb you," he added when he heard the pen scratching under Carroll's vigorous strokes.

"Excuse me."

Romanov paused in a room just off the main porch and with his face close to the window-blinds, tried to see through the thick wistaria beyond. Then he heard footsteps moving on the porch outside and the murmur of voices. Why had Janos Kyrallyi intercepted Feodora today — after having seen Romanov in town that morning? Romanov was not pleased. He was not a suspicious

man — only his love for his only daughter was stronger than himself. So he listened and peeped — peeped with straining eyes.

I had told him of what Luigi Melloni had told me concerning Janos Kyralyi's treatment of Gabrielle Ghica.

All was silent in the house. No words were distinguishable to Romanov listening at the window — but he could tell that Kyralyi was detaining Feodora. Kyralyi's voice was still indistinct, but his tone startled Romanov.

All at once he seized his revolver, leaped to the other window and peeped through the blinds; he could see his daughter. The walk in the blazing sun had put a light color in her cheeks and she was throbbing with unabated youth. Nothing so surely brings home a girl's pulsating womanhood to a man as the knowledge that the fervors and passions of humanity are still unawakened in her, and Kyralyi was trembling with uncontrollable excitement and agitation.

Romanov recognized the storming instincts that he could see were threatening to dominate this man. The look in his eyes was that of a wild beast from the bestial current that was surging through him, and he was utterly in its grip. Every gesture, every tone of Kyralyi's voice had an accurate meaning to the watcher from the window.

Feodora was moving away and Kyralyi paused. For the space of perhaps a minute he hesitated; then all at once she looked back, and with rising

anger Romanov realized that she was striving to control her wrath. And Kyralyi was quick to follow her.

This made her father wild. He wanted to kill this man with his hands. Romanov gripped the arm of a chair to steady himself. He was not merely trembling; he was weak from the raging fury that threatened to master him. He thought of scandal and feared to interfere if he could avoid it. So he ground his teeth in an effort to keep back his voice.

Presently the man's words were distinguishable to Romanov — the words he wanted to hear. Kyralyi accompanied a torrent of words with expressions and gestures that unerringly suggested his meaning.

Feodora eluded him as he attempted to kiss her and sprang to the porch. Romanov, peering through the blinds, saw her struggling in the arms of the Hungarian. Romanov was like a man in a dream; he could not move his limbs. She beat Kyralyi's face with her fists and screamed. Her cry stimulated Romanov like an electric shock.

Stephen Carroll, hearing Feodora's scream, reached the porch in time to see Kyralyi tearing at a bullet-wound in his chest and Feodora falling in a swoon. Presently Janos fell beside her, unconscious. The window-blind was shattered by Romanov's shot through the window.

Carroll had been watching through the window at which he was writing, but he had laid the paper

aside to regale his discriminating eyes with the daughter of Ivan Romanov; and so he did not write. His thoughts were focused on a tall and slender lady with elegant wide shoulders and a delicate wealth and symmetry of outline such as few girls of twenty-five could hope to possess. A soft sweet face lighted by eyes of deepest blue that looked out upon the world with sweet serenity and intelligence — eyes that Carroll would willingly trust with all he held most dear — sent a thrill through the frame of Stephen Carroll.

The vines obscured his view of the man until they struggled into view on the porch; he had rushed out without having seen the man's face. Now he lay unconscious and as Carroll stared at the prostrate figure, Carroll's lips moved, but he was unable to articulate as he clutched at a chair with starting eyes.

"It is Baron Laszlo's ghost!" he whispered to himself, as he collapsed into a chair. His eyeballs rolled in their sockets and he licked his dry lips.

Romanov, appearing now with the smoking revolver in his hand, approached Stephen Carroll, grasped his shoulder and shook him roughly.

"Come, come!" he said. "Are you another foe?"

Carroll clutched at his collar which was choking him; the veins stood out — purple and swollen — on his bald head. He pointed tremblingly and inquired:

"Who is he? What is his name?"

"He is your own flesh and blood!" said Romanov sternly; "Janos Kyralyi, the grandson of Baron Laszlo!"

"Janos Kyralyi!" screamed Carroll, his face purpling. "You have killed my son! It is my punishment! . . . The sins of the father shall be visited—" Carroll's lips tightened, and drew down at the corners of his mouth. The eyes stared but the body collapsed. It was a stroke of apoplexy.

Meanwhile, I had already arrived at the adjoining ranch with Rutledge. Finding the house deserted, I wandered about the grounds, eventually sending Rutledge away toward town, as I had no way of knowing how long I might be compelled to wait for my prospective customer. Each of us used small roadsters for our travels among the orchards.

Rutledge, my salesman, passing the Romanov house at the noon hour of August fifteenth, was saddened to find only the wistaria on the porch where he was wont to bow to Feodora. No servants appeared about the house. No smoke came from the chimney. Forlornly he rolled a cigarette and remembered that it was a quasi-holiday. Then he thought of Kentucky, his state, which he had not seen for many years. He expelled a profound sigh.

"The beautiful lady," he thought to himself.

"She is rich, lovely, cultured, able to gratify every taste! Why am I only the humble salesman?"

For a moment he hated his calling. But then he remembered that Romanov permitted Carroll to pay her his attentions. Perhaps she would refuse him after hearing the stories that were being spread about him. He wished Carroll had struck him as he struck Doctor Dugdale; he would have done terrible things! Thus was Rutledge musing, he afterwards told me.

"After all," he thought more comfortably, "a handsome salesman is as good as a Mexican mine-promoter; I'm a Southerner!" And he lit his cigarette and coasted noiselessly along toward Dixon.

Instead of waiting at the adjacent ranch, as I had planned to do, I thought it well to cross to the Romanov ranch, when I heard a shot from behind the trees that surrounded the Romanov house.

Romanov had discovered Carroll's helpless condition and carried him into an adjacent room. Feodora had been revived and was sobbing in her room. As I approached, he was standing over Kyralyi's body, undecided as to his next move. He explained what had occurred while I was examining Kyralyi, who was still breathing.

"He will die," I said.

"And I will be arrested for murder!" said Romanov.

I stepped into the room and surveyed Stephen

Carroll. He was totally paralyzed. Romanov stood beside me and I turned to say something, but stopped. My heart gave a jump and I grasped Romanov's arm, pointing at Carroll.

"What is it?" asked Romanov.

For answer, I snatched the green hat with the bow at the back and placed it on Romanov's bald head.

"Carroll!" I said.

"What do you propose?" Romanov asked.

By this time I was busy disrobing the stricken Carroll and tossing his garments to Romanov.

"Quick!" I said. "Get into his clothes and make all speed to Mexico, where I can let you know the outcome of Kyralyi's wound. If Carroll survives this stroke you can't come back to America, but if he dies I'll have him buried as Ivan Romanov. The likeness is remarkable and Dick Dugdale will take my word for its being you if Carroll dies before he arrives."

Then I assumed a leisurely manner and sauntered back to where I had left my roadster. My prospective customer had not returned to his house and I pinned a note to his door, advising him that I would come again on the following morning.

I had the machine at his porch when Romanov opened his door, attired in Carroll's garments.

Romanov's neighbor was standing in his door, reading my note, when we reached the road. I shouted an apology and remarked that my com-

panion wished to make a train out of Dixon. The prospective customer signified his indifference with a motion of his hand, gnawed at a plug of Black Navy, and spat tobacco in the path. The green hat with the bow at the back was pulled down over the eyes of my fashionably attired companion. The neighbor snickered again, recalling the nifty checked suit under the flowing ulster, and slouched back behind the house.

"Feodora's suitors!" he sniffed.

I had both hands on the wheel when my roadster swirled to the left toward Dixon. It was a good county road, sixty feet wide, that stretched before me and I caused the wheels on the little machine to spin more rapidly than they had ever revolved before.

"Have you any money?" I gasped, as the machine careened wildly along.

"Two thousand dollars which I drew for a trip to Europe," he returned. "I left a power of attorney on the desk, authorizing you to act for me in the event that my death is not proven. Should you bury Carroll as Ivan Romanov," he continued, "my will leaves everything to Feodora and she can get plenty of money either way."

"Better not talk any more," I advised, seeing some vehicles ahead of us.

In the distance the conductor's watch was held in his left hand, and his signal to the engineer with his right warned me of their imminent departure; I made all speed for the train.

Rutledge was standing on the platform when I arrived.

If that was Stephen Carroll, the garrulous and urbane stock-promoter, seated by my side in that little roadster, report had exaggerated his multiloquence. He buried his neck in his ample collar. Extreme anxiety was presented in every expression of his face, and around his mouth a gnawing misery was signified by its pathetic lines. He glanced at me when he alighted with an ox-like expression of thanks in his eyes, but said nothing; the train was pulling out. I waved my hand when my erstwhile companion swung himself up the step with one hand on the rail, and started my roadster across the tracks, ignoring Rutledge.

The machine went winding through Dixon and rushed on toward Sacramento. I did not halt until I reached the splendid Huckstep residence, unnoticed by the negro porter on the lawn — Aunt Eleanor's recent acquisition, Martin Van Buren Price.

Martin Van Buren Price climbed the step-ladder slowly, as was his habit, to wash the windows of the Huckstep dwelling. He was clad in a shirt of striped lavender madras, a minstrel four-in-hand, and wore a pair of snappy gray trousers from the sportal rejects of Meriwether Huckstep. A well-filled pail was ready on the topmost step but the ladder, alas! was wobbly. His ascent was dignified, for was not his employer the

largest stockholder in the bank? Four steps he made up the vacillatory ladder, and heard the bang! bang! of the cylinder-exhaust from the little engine that had impelled me from Dixon into Sacramento.

Then something happened to the well-filled bucket on the top step of the ladder. Martin Van Buren Price emitted a negro yawp that rose high above the spatter of splashing water which was mingled with the rattling staccato of the falling ladder. Turning about, the colored man scampered to the rear of the house, where he informed Aunt Eleanor that two shots had been fired at her front door.

Aunt Eleanor put on her spectacles and went to the front door, where she found me in the act of ringing the bell and explaining my part in the downfall of the black servant.

Before speaking of my efforts to aid the Romanovs I must again speak of Mrs. Huckstep. And in the first place, to explain my hurried trip to her house, I will say that my Aunt Eleanor, as I always called her, has been since my earliest recollections my best and dearest friend. It would be difficult, in fact, to imagine a more happy character, a heart more affectionate and devoted.

With a rare intelligence Aunt Eleanor divined something of what had occurred at Romanov's, although I did not speak of my wish to save Romanov from serving a prison sentence, although,

under the circumstances, it might have been but a light one.


Aunt Eleanor possessed a graceful address which, without boasting, I may say is peculiar to myself, and she was justly considered the first lady in Sacramento, a town which has long been noted for its patrician ladies. Yet Aunt Eleanor could be quite firm in a well-bred, reposeful manner that was most unmistakable. It was this valuable quality which she combined with her loyalty to me that prompted me to beg her to remain with Feodora Romanov indefinitely, or until the excitement in consequence of the shooting had abated.

She immediately acquiesced and I made such explanations as were necessary; then I descended to the sidewalk.

From around the side of the house Martin Van Buren Price watched me leaving in the roadster, mingled apprehension and disapproval depicted on his chocolate-colored visage.

The black mammy who served as cook for the Hucksteps was ordered to prepare a light repast quickly, while Mrs. Huckstep instructed Martin to arrange to drive her over to the Romanov house immediately.

If Feodora Romanov felt a great desolation in her heart, her appearance did not indicate it. She sat in a rustic chair behind the wistaria, in front of the door through which her father had dragged Janos Kyralyi before he left with me.



When Aunt Eleanor arrived she looked up with eyes that drooped wearily, but without surprise.

Aunt Eleanor alighted and begged her with characteristic graciousness to accept such friendly offices as she might be able to perform.

Feodora fought off the stupor in which her mind was benumbed.

"It is a holiday," said Feodora; "the ranch hands went to town this morning. I told the housekeeper that she might go too — so the place is almost deserted."

"Never mind," said Mrs. Huckstep; "my black woman over there in the park-wagon will help and we will talk over your worries. You need quiet and rest in your room."

"You are very good," said Feodora gratefully.

"Not at all; I'm acting for Jimmy!" Aunt Eleanor was preparing to take charge.

"Here, Mandy!" she called from the porch-steps.

"Yassum! — Comin', ma'am, comin' d'rec'ly!" sang the negress.

She drew off her gloves, laid them on her bag, motioned Mandy toward the kitchen with a wave of her hand and put on her spectacles.

"Is that the barn?" she inquired, pointing.

Feodora nodded.

"Take the team down that road to the barn, Martin!" she ordered. "Put up the horses for the night. Then go around to the kitchen and help your wife. There's sickness in this house —

Mr. Romanov's paralyzed — and we're going to stay here all night."

"Yassum!" answered the black factotum, reaching for the reins.

"My husband took his automobile north on a business trip," she explained to Feodora.

Mrs. Huckstep regarded the listless Feodora.

"When your housekeeper returns I suggest that you send her away for a few days, explaining that the house must be kept quiet on account of your father's condition. It will be better to have her out of the way; don't you think so?"

Again Feodora answered with a nod; then she inquired:

"May I ask you a question? I believe that Mr. Oyler would do anything to help — my father. What did Mr. Oyler tell you?"

"He did not have time to tell me very much," said Aunt Eleanor gently. "While your father was away the foreman of our ranch called and asked to look at the orchards. You showed him about the place and your father returned to the house during the interim. When you returned to the house with this man, your father saw the foreman attempt to kiss you. He shot him in a fit of anger and then fell in an apoplectic fit. The foreman cannot live; he is in that room" — she pointed — "and your father is in the adjoining one, stricken with paralysis. No one knows what has happened but you and I — and Jimmy Oyler. He has gone in search of Doctor Dick Dugdale,

his lifelong friend. They will return soon and do everything in their power to save the lives of both men — and above all, protect your father.”

She rattled it off in a monotone; Feodora shivered and asked:

“Does Doctor Dugdale know my — father?”

“He has heard of him, but I do not think they have met.”

“Thank God!” breathed Feodora; but Aunt Eleanor did not hear it.

“Will my — father — be able to speak to me — soon?” asked Feodora, her voice tense.

Aunt Eleanor smoothed the girl's soft hair gently; suddenly, this clear-headed woman threw her arms round Feodora and began to sob.

She was affected by the soft beauty of this girl, by the dry-eyed suffering she saw and thought she understood. Her breakdown was sudden but short-lived.

“I will show you through the house,” said Feodora, rising and still waiting for Aunt Eleanor to answer her question.

“You must be brave, my dear,” Aunt Eleanor said. “Mr. Oyler has seen such cases before; sometimes they recover but — not often.”

They made the rounds of the rambling house, walked about the garden, down to the quarters where the Hindoo laborers slept, then returned to the porch, where Feodora dropped into her chair again.

"If you don't mind being alone," she said, "I will lie down in my room until the doctor arrives."

"Do," urged Aunt Eleanor.

Feodora moved toward the door, but stopped, turned halfway and said:

"I cannot express my gratitude for your friendship and moral support in this terrible hour."

She passed quickly and noiselessly into the house.

I was very busy during the two hours that followed Romanov's departure, but I succeeded in finding Dick Dugdale, who was very busy during the hours that followed until midnight of August fifteenth.

Aunt Eleanor asked no questions and Doctor Dugdale told her nothing of the details of what occurred during those hours.

During the time that she had charge of affairs at Romanov's ranch, it would have taken more than the personality of even as strong a character as this invincible and unconquerable lady to prevent the morbidly curious from annoying Feodora. Possibly Aunt Eleanor's unyielding determination to shield this young girl would have been of no avail had it not been for her social position and Meriwether Huckstep's business activities in the Sacramento Valley. Those who might have made themselves objectionable refrained from motives of self-interest and in cautious cognizance

of the ramifications of Meriwether Huckstep's financial operations.

They will tell you in Dixon of the end of that terrible affair. They will tell you how the authorities came quickly when tidings arrived at Dixon and that Doctor Dugdale removed the wounded Janos Kyralyi to his own home in Sacramento and nursed him back to life and strength. They say that the authorities permitted Doctor Dugdale to bear his patient away; but none had aught to say against the paralytic lying in the adjoining room. That night Doctor Dugdale began a vigil at the bedside of the man whom the authorities believed to be Romanov, they say, which ended before midnight; and the news of his death was made known to the authorities, accompanied by the certificate signed professionally by Doctor Dugdale. At Romanov's ranch Mrs. Meriwether Huckstep had grasped the reins of management with accustomed capability. The hauteur which that dignified matron assumed quickly squelched the morbidly curious busybodies disposed to harass the heartsick Feodora.

The clerks in the bank at Dixon will speak of the two thousand dollars which Ivan Romanov drew to cover the expenses of his contemplated trip to Europe. But the two thousand dollars was never traced after his death.

In Sacramento Miss Romanov herself made a small loan temporarily, in order to secure funds

with which to pay for the burial of her father; but the loan was not liquidated until Francois Tournonet paid the first installment on his lease of the Romanov ranch.

So they sent the body of the paralytic to Sacramento for interment in the little cemetery at the end of the car-line that runs out to the suburbs, where semi-tropical foliage thrives exultant in the morning sun and the night wind sweeps past, moaning.

They will relate how Philomela, known to vaudeville as "The Zagrab Houri," was the beautiful wife of Janos Kyralyi; they will speak of her dead-white skin, contrastingly red lips and masses of shining hair, and her rich contralto voice which had regaled the myriad ears of countless audiences that had listened to her caroling.

You will hear also that Doctor Dugdale personally attended the wounded Janos Kyralyi until he had completely recovered; and that Feodora Romanov refused to make charges against him, although urged to do so by the authorities who, having no evidence against the Hungarian, permitted him to depart from the community.

The orchardists speak of the place where Feodora afterwards saw Janos Kyralyi with the wide eyes of secret dread. But that shall come later; for the bright lights are scintillating along Market Street, in a place where they coruscate auspiciously, inviting us to eat, drink and be merry.

CHAPTER IX

PHILOMELA, THE ZAGRAB HOURI

Until Feodora leased the ranch and prepared to depart for Europe, where she intended to join her father at the home of Professor Lamsdorff, I refrained from speaking of the sentiment that was so intense in my heart. Charlotte was with her; they had dropped in at my place of business in San Francisco.

It was the first time I had been alone with her since the affair at the ranch. Charlotte was examining some models, at least fifty feet from the back of the store where I was conversing with Feodora. We were waiting for Dick.

"Here is the key to our safe deposit box," said Feodora. "There are some coupons to be clipped occasionally; also, there are stock certificates which you can examine at your leisure."

She drew a legal envelope from her bag.

"Here is the power of attorney, authorizing you to act in my name while I am abroad. I acknowledged it and Mr. Huckstep left the original at the recorder's office. It will be mailed to you, I suppose."

She glanced uneasily around.

"Stephen Carroll's stock was assigned to my father as collateral security. Most of Carroll's stock in the Sierra Madre Gold Mining Company was purchased with money borrowed from my father. You will know best how to establish title to the stock. I have signed the proxies so that you can attend the meeting of the stockholders."

Her voice was calm, but her hands moved restlessly. I was attempting a diversion and her blue eyes flashed with the familiar jolly, compelling charm into mine. She was in a soft blue gown which made her eyes look the color of corn-flowers.

I burst into a great laugh.

"My, my!" I cried. "I shall hire an assistant, since my office has developed into a real estate and agency office. At present I act as agent for the Hucksteps, the Lamsdorffs, the Dugdales, the Romanovs — and only this afternoon I was asked to represent the beautiful Philomela in a real estate transaction."

She smiled appreciatively.

"It was so nice of you to arrange the supper for her tonight. Charlotte and I are very anxious to meet her."

My eyes caught and held hers for a swift, warm moment. She was very beautiful in this soft blue gown, through which all the supple grace of her body seemed, like an imprisoned fire, to strain. I heard Dick, outside in the store, speaking to Charlotte. He could not observe us behind the

office partition. I loved her — every look I gave her told her so; every word I spoke. As she did not answer, I leaned slowly toward her.

She caught her breath.

“Don’t,” she begged, all a-tremble. “Charlotte is coming!” She brought her hands round and pressed them fiercely against my chest, holding me away from her and crying in a low voice: “Jimmy —” She was tremulous with agitation.

I laughed and came to my senses after I had kissed her.

She flushed and paled, looking wildly round her; and then, like one who suddenly hurls herself from all hampering bonds, her arms — trembling — reached up round my neck and clung there.

I have now arrived at a moment when I shall quit forever the mournful and wearisome details of the numerous misfortunes that preceded this confession of her love for me; but my readers will notice with some surprise to what a futile circumstance I owed my release from a state of discouragement which I had fancied would last forever. We announced our engagement to Dick and Charlotte, and from this moment began the happiness which has never left us since.

Suppose, dear reader, that on leaving with Luigi Melloni to become his apprentice, I had not found him marked with the scar which occasioned his telling me of Janos Kyralyi and Stephen Carroll’s desertion of Janos’s mother. I should certainly have finished with him in exactly the same

manner, but I should not have been in possession of the facts which caused Feodora to refuse to marry him when she learned that he was Janos Kyrallyi's father and a man who had deserted a wife in Europe. His last cry, before the stroke of apoplexy, convinced the Romanovs of the truth of my statement. But I was going to speak of the merry evening we enjoyed in San Francisco before Feodora went to meet her father in Europe.

I had renewed my acquaintance with Philomela and invited her to visit the cafés some evening. She spoke of Luigi Melloni's success as a bandmaster and informed me that a letter addressed to him in care of the Lamsdorffs at Agram would be forwarded to him. She seemed much interested in my success, and as the conversation drifted into a discussion of my recently developed real estate activities, she expressed a desire to purchase a California ranch.

My fortune was not large and I gulped at this; only that morning a lean, saturnine individual had left a description of his ranch and given me the exclusive sale for thirty days. I knew the market; it was a genuine snap at the price. The commission would amount to thousands of dollars.

"Madam," I said to Philomela, "I have been given the exclusive sale of a ranch in Solano County, which is worth far more than is asked. I will be candid and admit that, were I in a position to buy this property for myself, I would not offer it to you. It is a ranch adjoining the

Romanov place on the County Road, a few miles from Dixon.

Philomela, revolving the name, Romanov, in her mind, presently recalled her aunt, Madame Lamsdorff, the professor's friend Romanov, and Feodora, the pretty California girl who boarded with the Lamsdorffs while Romanov traveled.

"Why doesn't Romanov buy this ranch?" she inquired.

"Romanov is dead," I said. "There was some sort of a shooting-scrape."

Luigi Melloni had requested me to refrain from any discussion of Gabrielle's past when I was with them, and she did not dream that I knew of her past experience as the wife of Janos Kyralyi.

"Who shot Romanov?" Philomela inquired.

"No one," I said. "He died of nervous shock after he put a bullet into Janos Kyralyi."

Her face reddened violently — a strange tremor seemed to shake her. Her fingers twisted in her lap, but she met my eyes full.

"You interest me," she said with mild interest. "I knew a man named Janos Kyralyi — in Dalmatia."

"This man was an ex-convict," I said. "He was Hungarian."

She shrank back instinctively, with drooping head.

We talked desultorily for some time, and during the interview I discovered that Romanov's neighbor had already offered his property through

a Sacramento agent who had taken Philomela to the property. Here she had spoken to the owner who, at that time, asked a higher price for the ranch.

That the owner would raise the price at the expiration of my agent's agreement was Philomela's apprehension, a fear which I shared; it was no time for haggling.

We visited the office of an attorney, where I receipted for a substantial deposit as earnest money in exchange for my contract, bond and agreement with Philomela; then we telephoned a long-distance message to the owner, who promised to come to San Francisco that evening. As the rancher could not arrive until after eleven o'clock that evening, I asked Philomela to visit the cafés with me during the interval.

Then Charlotte and Dick unexpectedly called at my store with Feodora. Later, Rutledge came in, and I introduced Feodora as my promised wife. That excellent young man was so delighted that he immediately insisted upon our being his guests at a dinner at the Techau Tavern. To this we agreed and Rutledge departed to arrange for the party in advance.

Dinner at the Techau Tavern was at six. Therefore, the waiters, cooks and mixologists arrived at their wardrobes in the basement at five. The little mirrored restaurant stood on the north side of Market Street, at a junction of one of San Francisco's busiest thoroughfares.

There, that evening, the attendants gathered for the work of the night, bringing their dickeys and badges with them. A passage or hall of communication twenty feet wide led into the dining-room, flanked at the entrance by two tropical shrubs bourgeoning in solid tubs.

But on this evening, instead of dining at a side table as usual, the steward stood with pencil and pad awaiting an early patron. For there in the passage was coming, jauntily, the debonair Rutledge.

He seated himself opposite the restaurant steward, more absorbed in the menu for the moment than in his business of selling my well-machinery. His suit of Scotch tweed, tight, spare of material, cut in the extreme of a coming fad, enclosed him taut, like garments drawn by a cartoonist to illustrate some idiosyncrasy of fashion. But across his high-cut waistcoat and barred to his buttonhole there dangled a heavy chain — divided, alas! by a swivel from which hung a charm, the telltale evidence of his superficialities.

The departure of the steward, followed by the advent of the head-waiter with pencil and card and the lighting of the dining-room by an impatient hand, animated Rutledge. He leaned back, pondering, and stuck the pencil in his mouth.

Drawing a heavy watch from its anchorage, he compared what he saw on its open face with the clock on the wall. And while doing this he became aware that the restaurant man was linger-

ing by his side, and that dozens of snowy-bosomed waiters were placing silver and linen on the adjacent tables.

If the gentleman would have the kindness — excuse the haste — but the patrons would soon be crowding for places — it would be a pleasure to take the order immediately for the gentleman! In this manner the Alsatian head-waiter conveyed to him the information that he must give his order and refrain from causing them to squander more of this precious harvest-hour.

Rutledge reached into his tight pockets, and closed his fingers over a piece of silver of the largest size in circulation in the United States. The waiter watched him withdraw his hand, his thoughts concentrated on its destination and contents. Languidly Rutledge released the coin and it fell into the waiting palm of the Alsatian. While Rutledge wrote the order for a wonderful course dinner on a pad handed him by the head-waiter, that functionary moved noiselessly down the aisle, informing the waiters that the gentleman in the English clothes would reserve his table for two hours.

Dick and I reached the restaurant with Charlotte and Feodora shortly after six, where Rutledge sat waiting for us. An orchestra dispensed music from soup to nuts. It was a six-course dinner that Rutledge ordered, with cocktails, wine and liqueurs. As the service was perfect, we were able to leave the café shortly after eight.

It was Dick's suggestion that we attend Philomela's performance at the theatre. The box-office was sold out, but Dick found seats at a cigar-stand. The cigar-dealer had only box seats; Dick bought the entire box.

That performance proved the beginning of Rutledge's affair with Philomela, the Zagrab Hour. The show was in progress when we arrived. Beautifully costumed ladies displayed their innocent charms, singing selections from the best music; there followed a one-act drama, at the conclusion of which the advertisements came down and the lights went up. During the intermission Dick and Rutledge went out, the former telling his companion of Philomela's beauty.

"I do not wish to exaggerate," Dick was whispering when they were seated again, "but to say that she is enchanting is to speak with moderation. If you are interested to meet her, Oyler has an appointment with her after the performance, and you may as well stay with us."

Philomela was next on the programme.

Strains from "Rigoletto" became unbroken melodies as they whispered behind me. Then the orchestra took up the air of Hilda's song, and the most absolutely ravishing specimen of the feminine sex Rutledge had ever beheld sang "Carlo Baldi" magnificently; it was Philomela.

The house was in an uproar of applause when the last notes of her song died away; and not half the audience understood a word of it; she

sang the words in French. The rich contralto tones lingered on Rutledge's ear long after she had gone; he added his applause to the general din until she sang again.

Then the dulcet tones of Serpolette's little song, "Pristi, Sapristi," were floating on the air. She wore a German madchen's costume, but Rutledge scarcely noticed it for her black-eyed loveliness.

And when she faced our box and saw Rutledge and their eyes met, something passed from her to him and from him to her — well, her cheeks flushed and he was tingling. The song was ended with a little nod of recognition directly at me — and she was gone. The band played noisily and the applause was engulfed in the blare.

I sent a note around to Philomela, inquiring how soon she could join us in Dick's machine. The reply directed me to remain in the box until she could join us there. Philomela was not apathetic; her blithe spirit craved jollity; but when it came to allowing herself to be seen in public places as a guest, she was most discriminating in her choice of associates. Therefore, her appearance in our box created a stir in the crowded house, as I introduced my companions.

Rutledge was entranced when "The Zagrab Houri" acknowledged the introduction with a glance at him out of her beautiful eyes. She spoke with that slight foreign accent which is so becoming to a pretty woman. Feodora mentioned Madame Lamsdorff and they were immedi-

ately interested in exchanging bits of information concerning the Lamsdorffs.

"We are fellow-investors," Philomela was saying to Feodora. "Mr. Carroll sold me some of his stock at Sacramento and left abruptly, saying that he wished to make a train for the Romanov ranch."

"Mr. Oyler knew Mr. Carroll in Southern California," evaded Feodora with a little attempt at gaiety.

I was the only one in the party who knew the ghastly story that lay beneath my sweetheart's outward calm; she was a strange, clever creature.

Philomela stared at me through narrowed lids.

"I met him once," contributed Rutledge; "but I evaded his preparations to canvass me by suggesting that he see his Sacramento friends first. He rushed off to the train when I told him that Romanov was away."

"He seemed very optimistic," Philomela said, relaxing, contented and stimulated unconsciously by the open admiration of the breezy Rutledge.

"Stephen Carroll once gave me a cause to remember him," said Dick, addressing Philomela.

"Just before we were married," was Charlotte's soft rejoinder.

"The most important event in my life," Dick assured her, with a gallant wave of the hand.

"Carroll struck Doctor Dugdale with a putter," I remarked. "The blow came from behind and he was seriously injured."

"The act of a coward!" Philomela's tone indicated some warmth, well-acted and not overdone.

The performance was not in the least interesting to us. The acrobats were finishing and the next number was a trained animal act. Rutledge was paying no attention whatever to the performers. The theatre had grown tiresome to him in comparison with the charm of Philomela's electrical intelligence.

I laughed out suddenly, reaching for the wraps behind the portière, at which the others arose.

When we reached the street, the gallery audience was pouring into the crowd that always moves compactly along Market Street amid fierce noises of sirens from innumerable automobiles and the crashing of heavy street-cars: a wonderfully interesting San Francisco crowd — with its multitude of types from all over the East and all the nations of Europe as well as Island countries; dark-eyed Greeks, Corsicans and Corfiotes; suspicious Chinese and Japanese; glittering Montenegrins, Armenians and Albanians; mysterious Egyptians and Syrians; crafty Arabs and Turks. They crush past with the Americans, careless if they tread upon Anglo-Saxon or Teuton, or force Latin, Slav or Magyar into the mud.

"San Francisco is the Vienna of America," Philomela said lightly, as Rutledge handed her into Dick's machine.

Feodora nodded confirmatively.

"That is where I first met Mr. Oyler," Philomela remarked, "in — in Vienna." She turned toward me and suddenly asked: "Have you been to Europe since, Jimmy? I hope I may call you Jimmy," she added.

"By all means," I laughed. "That was nearly fifteen years ago," I went on, "and I do not remember much about Vienna."

"At least," she agreed placidly. "Now you have betrayed my age!" she finished.

We laughed merrily and the car swung into McAllister Street.

Dick was behind the wheel with Charlotte beside him. Rutledge and I occupied the folding seats at the side of the car and faced Philomela and Feodora, ensconced among the cushions of the roomy seat at the back of the machine.

"Ever been out at the Cliff House?" asked Feodora, turning to Philomela.

"Not at night," she said.

"It is very beautiful by moonlight, when the breakers are high," she told her. "This is a perfect night for a ride along the beach."

"I watched the seals playing on the rocks one afternoon," Philomela responded.

Rutledge was speaking:

"Why were you interested in the mining man — Carroll?"

Her face hardened.

"Because he insulted me by ignoring my greeting when I saw him on the train at Dixon."

Feodora started.

"I attended a ball-game with him the day before this occurred and when he entered the coach naturally I beckoned him to a seat beside me, but he did not so much as lift his hat," Philomela explained.

"Perhaps it was not Carroll," I suggested.

"But it was," Philomela insisted. "His actions were most peculiar," she went on, frowning. "Shortly after he was seated, an officer took him into the baggage-car. Of course, I was interested and questioned the conductor. He said the immigration officers were searching for a man named Rogers, at which I identified the suspected man as Carroll and the conductor spoke for him to the officer. I saw the conductor again in San Francisco. He had subsequently talked to the officer. The officer told him that the man had done nothing wrong, yet he offered the officer five hundred dollars to allow him to depart unmolested."

"I suppose the officer abused him roundly for that!" said Rutledge.

"He did nothing of the kind," she said in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Did the officer accept the money?" half sneered Dick.

"Yes," she said, trying to sound evasive.

"When Carroll went into the forward car with him?" I asked.

"Yes." The lady was silent.

"Why did the officer tell of his villainy?" Rutledge wondered aloud.

"The conductor says that Carroll left the train at Vallejo, followed by the officer, who arrested him there," she said.

"After taking his money?" Feodora cried indignantly.

"Assuredly!" Philomela said.

"Was the—" and Feodora, catching my look, coughed and bit her lip. "Was this officer proud of his treachery?" she managed to say quite calmly.

"He did nothing wrong," Philomela said carelessly.

Feodora settled back in her seat and lapsed into silence.

"The officer is not a very likable person," Charlotte vouchsafed.

"The conductor spoke of him in the highest terms," said Philomela respectfully.

"How could he?" I asked scornfully.

"Because the officer returned the money, as Carroll will tell you if he returns to solicit investments again," she said with a pretty moue that made Rutledge roar with laughter.

We talked desultorily for the remainder of the trip to the Cliff House. The steward seated us at a table against a sheltering wall, facing the breakers, and served us steaming coffee.

Rutledge and Philomela were most congenial. She enjoyed listening as he talked ingenuously

of himself and his failures, his conversation interspersed with quaint imagery and diversified with homely philosophy — remnants of the child-spirit; for Rutledge, with all his business acumen, had the disposition of a care-free schoolboy.

“Do you know Madame Massoni, the contralto?” he queried.

“No,” she said. “Where did you hear her?”

“Right here in San Francisco a couple of years ago,” said Rutledge. “I’ll tell you about my experience as a critic for one of the newspapers. Madame Massoni came here in vaudeville to the same house where you are singing and it was operated by the same manager then. The manager blew into the newspaper office where I was working with a handful of give-away tickets. The managing editor called me into his office after the manager left; I thought it was all off with my job when he had me on the carpet.

“‘That German has another dago contralto here in vaudeville,’ he said; ‘you can try your hand at a write-up.’

“The boss gave me a ticket and I went around and heard her sing; then I went behind and asked her how she liked our city and whether she thought she would ever come back. That was about all there was to my interview. Then I stopped at one of these get-your-home-paper push-carts and bought half a dozen papers from Tallahassee to the Coos Bay country.

“Say! Did you ever have to write a long puff

about somebody who was good at something of which you knew nothing? No? Well, that is what I had to do; so I went through those six papers and clipped out everything that had the least thing to do with singing. Then I wrote a puff for Madame Massoni that was a composite sketch of every woman mentioned as a singer in those six papers. I didn't slight any of them either!

"But I'll tell you how I got twisted. Every woman singing in those towns I read about was a soprano, and Madame Massoni was a contralto. I didn't find that out until afterwards; time was flying. I wrote in a long description of her personal appearance, how she was dressed, how the audience received her — and all of that stuff, and called it a job.

"What do you suppose the public thought of that write-up? Can't imagine? Well, I'll show you the clipping some time. I kept it as a souvenir. It got by the boss that night because I was still working at it when he went home, but I was fired out of the newspaper game. Know why? The boss thought I must have been drunk when I wrote it. The boys in the press-room gave her the column I turned in to them; but if Madame Massoni had dared to wear some of the things my article said she wore, the audience would have mobbed her. Say! What I don't know about music and women's gowns would stock a library."

"What did the manager of the theatre say?" asked Philomela.

"Him?" laughed Rutledge. "He doesn't know any more about it than I do. He thought it was fine! He told me that Madame Massoni described my column as one of the wittiest satires she had ever read. He thought that meant she liked it!"

"Do you intend to return to newspaper work?" she asked.

"Couldn't if I wanted to; but I'm not sorry," he rattled on. "I used to envy the boys who were drawing down their twenty-five a week, but a book-keeper where I room gets two-fifty a month; and he only adds a few columns and posts entries. My business is selling pumps and engines and well-machinery for Mr. Oyler. He has developed a real estate agency business lately, and that reminds me that you bought a ranch through him, and that the deal is signed, sealed and delivered — except for the signature of the man who must sign the deed. He is to reach San Francisco before twelve, so we'll have to be climbing into our buzz-wagon shortly. It is eleven now. Do you mind suggesting it to Mr. Oyler?"

"He seems to be busy now," said Philomela dryly.

I had just found Feodora's hand. It was a hand that expressed her — slender, pretty, nervous, yet competent and, above all, pathetic. I

had just curled my fingers round the tips of hers and gripped them when Philomela spoke. Philomela looked away and did not see her return the pressure.

"They have just announced their engagement," Rutledge said, as he handed her into the machine, "and I gave them their first party this evening."

Ten minutes later the machine darted out of Golden Gate Park and was headed for McAllister Street.

"Suppose we all go down to the Ferry together," suggested Philomela.

"Your farmer friend might like to meet the ladies, Jimmy," said Dick banteringly.

"Not a bad idea," said Rutledge over his shoulder. "Miss Feodora may like him. You said he owned a ranch, didn't you?"

Rutledge grinned happily, his droll expression heightening Philomela's merriment as we turned into Market Street.

"You haven't told me anything about Carroll's history," Philomela said, smiling into my eyes.

I half closed my eyes and regarded her closely. I suspected this brilliant creature of shrewdly rallying me; her interest in Carroll's adventure with the immigration officer had acquainted me with some of the subtleties of the feminine Slav (which are without number) and I expected to find her figuring in his affairs in some manner — how, I did not know.

"Stephen Carroll's name was Kyralyi," I said.

"He married Baron Laszlo's daughter and afterwards deserted her and his infant son, Janos — the man who was wounded by Mr. Romanov. Janos Kyralyi will kill him if they meet again — which is not likely, as Janos fled to Europe as soon as Doctor Dugdale pronounced him out of danger and turned him out of the sickroom. Carroll was —"

The lady was gripping my arm and staring at me wide-eyed.

"You mean that Janos is not dead?" she questioned, her voice vibrant — almost harsh.

"Certainly not!" I said. "Why? Do you know him?"

Then Philomela told us the story which Melloni had given me many years ago. She had made efforts to locate him since he came to America, but they were unavailing — Philomela was explaining as the machine was brought to a standstill behind the barrier at the Ferry Building. Here Rutledge betook himself to the waiting-room.

When he returned Romanov's neighbor was with him, his expression showing precursory symptoms of a latent snicker.

"Ladies and gentlemen — individually and collectively — Miss Feodora will introduce her neighbor," said Rutledge when he breezed up to the machine. "I propose that we have something to eat at a cabaret; what do you say, ladies?"

Philomela made room for the rancher beside her and he stepped into the car.

Soon we were speeding around the Embarcadero and out Washington Street, off Columbus Avenue and down the brightly illuminated thoroughfare that skirts the Barbary Coast. The cabaret where Rutledge asked Dick to stop was famed on two continents as Cæsar's. Rutledge turned to Philomela, saying:

"The cooking here is real art; and the service is perfection."

The rancher snickered but said nothing, as he followed the others down the winding stairs and around a dancing-floor, which was oscillating to the rhythmic tread of the revellers. Feodora had never learned to dance; it is needless to state that the rancher was receiving his first impressions of the tango and the half-and-half, the maxixe, the three-step and the hesitation waltz; but Rutledge was in his element with Philomela.

Dick and Charlotte also danced.

"Dick, my dear," Charlotte said, "I believe there is a common streak in me somewhere. I intend to abandon myself to the lure of the bunny hug, the kitchen sink, and the turkey trot." And she did.

Charlotte danced with Rutledge while Philomela was resting. Dick and I exchanged remarks on one side of the table; this left the rancher and Philomela together on the opposite side.

"Mr. Oyler has sold your place to me," observed Philomela.

"Reckon so," was the laconic reply.

"I suppose you were surprised to hear that Romanov shot a man on his ranch," she ventured.

"Maybe Romanov didn't do it," he answered sourly.

"Weren't the Romanovs alone on the place with Kyralyi?"

"Nope!"

"Who — who else did you see?" she asked eagerly and incorrectly.

"Dude with a beard; looked just like Romanov. He wore a green hat and checked suit and — a nose-bleed; that's slang for red necktie," he snickered.

"Did you tell this to the authorities?"

"What's the use? It wouldn't get me anything."

"When did the — dude — leave the ranch?"

"Oh, about two hours after I heard the shot; Oyler drove him to Dixon, I reckon; anyway, they took that road. Interested?"

She lifted her flexible eyebrows and turned to me, tapping the table authoritatively. She did not answer the question.

I trembled slightly — I never knew why — for there was no sign then of any crisis.

There was a short silence. The dancers returned to their seats when the music ceased.

"If you will deliver the deed tomorrow morning early," said Philomela thoughtfully, "I will go up and take charge of my new ranch."

"Got the spot cash ready?" asked the rancher curtly.

"Yes."

"The ranch is yours," he said.

Rutledge called the waiter, ordered champagne, and studied the menu-card.

From the time she learned from Janos that his mother was Baron Laszlo's daughter, Philomela held herself to be of the aristocracy of Europe. Philomela was an only daughter, raised by a Roumanian politician who constantly discussed diplomatic matters with his associates in her presence. She had acquired his viewpoint and a longing to mingle with titled personages on an equal footing.

She despised the little village of Fabian where Janos had found her and always gave the impression that she was a Viennese. More by the mention of his connection with the family of Baron Laszlo than by fear had she been influenced to urge Janos to marry her that night in Cetinje. He had mistreated and deserted her, yet she had never thought of divorcing him, working and planning always to become the Baroness Laszlo by searching for the missing Baron Laszlo, who had disappeared when his wife deserted him to follow Guillaume Champfleury, the sculptor. So she had kept close track of Janos until he eluded her when he was sent to prison. Since then she had spent large sums of money for investigations and a search for Janos's father and grandfather.

She had even sought to interest Stephen Carroll in her search, because of his having resided in Austria and Russia prior to his mining ventures in Mexico. That was when she first met him as a purveyor of mining stock. But Carroll had been decidedly unwilling to interest himself in anything but the mines, so she had said no more about it to him. He had not been willing to discuss the subject at sufficient length to learn that Philomela had married the grandson of Baron Laszlo.

By her association with peoples of many nations, she had developed an aptitude for languages, for she had been schooled in a country where at least twenty languages were spoken in the legislative bodies. She had shown more than ordinary talent for music as a child, but she never, either as a child or as a woman, allowed her social aspirations to diminish.

In Italy she and Janos got along well together, for Janos was an easy-going fellow, attracted by the beauty of his wife and pleased with her ability as a singer. Her singing brought money and adulation after Janos deserted her. She had a passion for clothes and was always faultlessly dressed in the latest mode. The fashionable hostesses who invited her to sing at their affairs were always sure they would have one entertainer who would carry herself with the utmost rigidity of polite deportment. She was skillful in weaving into her conversation accounts of her successes, and she maintained a pose of wealth and social

standing with an irresistible manner of bluffing that was entirely convincing to most people.

Her only object in life, aside from accumulating money, was to bring about the conferring of the title Baron Laszlo upon Janos through his claims as the grandson of Baron Laszlo, and she would have attempted anything in reason to bring about her own recognition as the Baroness Laszlo. With this in mind, she had refrained from divorcing Janos, pretending reasons which were totally foreign to her nature, for she was entirely self-centered and cared nothing for the attentions of men, except as she might use them to her own advantage, until she met Rutledge.

Since she had traveled in the principal cities of the world, she had acquired a high-bred air and secretly disdained the proletariat, but when she found it expedient she could assume a very democratic manner.

She had it in mind to make another marriage sometime — after Janos had killed himself or been killed, as she believed was quite likely — a marriage that would provide her the position that would enable her to take the place she desired socially. Her dearest ambition was to return to Vienna as a baroness. She regarded all men with the cold and shrewd eye of appraisal, devoid of sentiment, her whole attitude toward them being to use them for social advantages and company. But the thought of really falling in love never crossed her mind — until she met Rutledge.

The next morning title to the ranch adjoining Romanov's place was passed to Philomela, and with the acquisition of this property, thoughts of Rutledge faded from her mind, with the ambition to possess the title of Baroness dominant in her mind.

She told me that, owing to the circumstances of Janos's flight from Italy to America, she had refrained from any reference to Janos as her husband. In the year following his desertion of her, she had been signally successful financially, and in the spring of her first professional year, she wrote a letter to Luigi Melloni, reciting that Janos had received his mother's jewels from the priest at Cetinje, who told Janos they came to him from America when his mother died there while searching for Stephen Carroll. She asked Melloni to endeavor to find some news of the Baron Laszlo, Janos's grandfather, who disappeared when his wife ran away with Guillaume Champfleury.

In her letter she explained that talent, beauty and money had come to her, but above everything in the world, she prized a connection with the titled aristocracy. She received a reply from Melloni, advising her that he had news of Guillaume Champfleury who would know all about the Baron Leszlo whose wife he had stolen long years ago.

She wrote, enclosing him funds to be used in making a search for Champfleury, requesting that Melloni place her in communication with him.

Melloni had been unable to do this, as Champfleury had disappeared.

During her trip across America Melloni reported no progress in his search for the old Baron Laszlo, and she asked him to go to Milan and redeem the Laszlo jewels which Janos had pawned, sending the pawn tickets and a description of them.

Some months later she reached Sacramento and attended a ball-game with Stephen Carroll. She had watched the distinguished figure in the gray-checked suit and green hat with the bow at the back as he left the theatre that day, and presently recalled a picture of Janos's father which she had examined once before on the occasion of a previous meeting with Carroll.

At Dixon the figure in the gray-checked suit and green Fedora hat had boarded the train in great haste, burying his black beard in the capacious collar of a flowing ulster and ignoring her invitation to sit beside her. That night she had again unwrapped the picture of the man who deserted Baron Laszlo's daughter — the picture that Janos had left behind when he took flight from Italy. It was the picture of a young man of perhaps twenty-two or twenty-three, and there was a decided resemblance to the features of Stephen Carroll.

She had just purchased the ranch from Romanov's neighbor, and his mysterious and evasive remarks about the presence of Carroll at Ro-

manov's ranch, when Janos was wounded, presented to her the possibility of proving that Carroll was buried instead of the fleeing Romanov. This would enable Janos to prove his parentage and thus inherit Stephen Carroll's controlling interest in the Sierra Madre Gold Mining Company.

It would require many pages to describe the numberless details of this procedure; but this description, far too lengthy for these memoirs, would be of but little interest to my readers. Still, I cannot resist the desire of cursorily explaining that Philomela exhumed the body at Sacramento, and although the likeness of Carroll to Romanov was sufficient to exonerate from blame those who identified the paralytic as Romanov, the corpse was officially identified as Stephen Carroll. This was done after Feodora Romanov had departed for Europe, and she was not called upon to testify at the investigation. On this occasion Rutledge and I told what we knew, and the incident was thereafter closed.

Philomela set to work immediately to find Janos, notifying the Sierra Madre Gold Mining Company in the meantime of her claim to his stock on behalf of her husband, Janos Kyralyi.

As a commission on the sale of the ranch which she bought from Romanov's neighbor, I received a sum which I invested in the two thousand dollars' worth of stock which Philomela had subscribed when Carroll approached her in Sacramento. This marked my first move in the direction of the

goal of my childish aims — to be a great mining official.

It was while in conversation with Dick Dugdale that I suddenly noted our unusual resemblance. What if we were related? Why not? I had never learned anything of my forebears beyond my father and mother. Dick's father had married old man Mackey's sister and Mackey could go back a few generations. Dick's father was the reckless son of Sir Richard Dugdale who married Susan Holcroft. Her father, Lord Holcroft, had another daughter, Josephine, who married Guillaume Champfleury, notwithstanding the fact that she was already married to the Baron Laszlo, by whom she had had two daughters. One of these daughters was deserted by Stephen Carroll. Janos was their son. Was I the son of the other daughter?

CHAPTER X

A STRANGE VISITOR — AND THE PRESIDENCY

It may seem strange that I thus pass from my business affairs to my genealogy; but if my readers will bear in mind that these two subjects were to unite in producing my success, it will be easily understood that I felt an equal degree of affection for them, and that after mentioning one I must allude to the other. That Feodora had promised to marry me within the year did not drive from my thoughts my determination to satisfy her father as to my ancestry.

I had exhausted the possibilities of the few facts I had, for I had never stopped working at them. I was hence unable to investigate further until the advent of an accidental visitor. His story left me trembling like a child.

It was growing late and the office was deserted. I had had a hard day and the work told on me — I was worn out. At this time, when I was most discouraged, the business was flourishing. I had been obliged to employ three additional stenographers to handle my agency mail. My letters were answered and posted. I sank into a swivel-chair

at my desk and closed my eyes for a moment's rest. From outside came the sound of shuffling feet and the tap of a heavy cane on the paving; then I heard my door open and close again; the visitor sat down.

"What can I do for you?" I said sharply, without turning round. "I can't give you very much time — it's growing late — I want to close the office!"

I received no reply but could hear the rustle of clothing, as of some one swaying from side to side. I turned, with an exclamation of impatience. An old man was seated near the door. He was dressed in the heavy, blanket-wool kind of suit so popular in the mountains. It had evidently been well-made, but now it was twisted and wrinkled like the features of the wearer.

The coat was buttoned tight around the lean figure, as if to give it support like a corset. His bony knees showed through the baggy trousers, and his shoes were scratched and scarred, as if scuffed by careless walking. The old man's face was unusual; his appearance was distressing.

A heavily-wrinkled forehead constantly in motion: snow-white hair over the ears which jerked convulsively: a thin nose over which the skin was tightly drawn — a face to arouse instant pity — and the thin-lipped gash of a mouth completed a picture of pathetic helplessness, as involuntary grimaces and grins succeeded each other during his efforts to speak.

"My boy," said the man finally in a quavering voice, "I don't have to tell you what's the matter with me, do I? You know the symptoms?"

"No," I said. "What ails you?"

The man pondered a minute and steadied his limbs — bracing his knees against the oak desk.

"It's lead-poisoning, my boy," he said. "The lead mines almost finished me — but I'm getting rid of the poison gradually."

"I'm very sorry — will a little money do you any good? Is that why you came in?" I asked, turning in my chair to indicate that the interview was about to end.

"Yes," the man answered between gasps and contortions, "but I need sympathy and someone to talk to more, or I'll lose my mind. Everyone gives me something but no one wants to listen."

I turned and faced the man as he continued:

"It may be an unusual thing to say, my boy, and maybe you'll think I'm crazy, but I only came in to have a look at you this evening. That was my errand. Some months ago when I was passing here I saw you through the window, and there was another red-headed man in here too. You were like enough to be brothers. I don't pay much attention to people but I wrote the name on a piece of paper that day. I copied the sign over your door. Here it is. Is that your name, or is it the other red-headed man's name?"

"My name is Oyler," I said.

"There was something familiar in the name,"

said the man. "I knew of a man named Oyler years ago."

"My father came here with the Argonauts," I said.

"My boy," continued the old man, "that name brought back many recollections to me — the name Oyler — don't you see? And I thought: 'I'll go and see this man. This Oyler may be the man I have in mind.' But I'll see you some other time. I suppose you want to close up your office now."

Here was a caller who knew something about my itinerant father!

"Hold on!" I cried, now thoroughly interested. "Keep your seat! . . . Go ahead — talk! We'll stay as long as you like. Who are you?"

"Thanks! Just as you say, my boy," he said. "Let me begin by asking if you can remember anybody by the name of Holcroft?"

"I've heard the name," I said. "Susan Holcroft was the other red-haired man's grandmother. His name is Dugdale — Dick Dugdale."

"Her father was Lord Holcroft! And he had red hair and you two men looked enough like him to be his sons the day I saw you through the glass!"

I made no comment, gazing at my caller with curious imaginings and white-hot interest. The man continued:

"There was an older daughter — Josephine Holcroft. She married Baron Laszlo of the Aus-

trian Legation. You've heard of Josephine, my boy?"

"Yes," I replied. "I believe Laszlo disappeared. There was some kind of gossip — I've never learned just what it was."

"There was a lot of talk," said the old man harshly — "a lot of talk, my boy; and nothing but lies! Rotten lies! Don't you think I ought to know? I ought to know, because I'm Guillaume Champfleury, the man whose name was linked with hers in the scandal — the wreck of what was once the great artist — way back in the days when Laszlo came to London to intrigue against his own country!"

The visitor paused; his face worked convulsively and his limbs jerked.

"Do you know the story about Josephine Holcroft?" he asked.

"No, I've no definite information connecting you with Josephine Holcroft," I said, generously disclaiming the recollection of what I had heard.

"After we quit London and went to Paris, why didn't someone try to find out the truth instead of pointing the finger of scorn at Josephine? Do you know why?"

"Maybe they waited for you to explain," I said. "You mean to tell me the story, don't you, Mr. Champfleury?"

"Yes; and maybe I can put you in the way of locating an inheritance." He shifted the heavy cane under his elbow and rested on his arm. "I'll

tell you the facts from the beginning. Most men attribute their misfortunes to ill luck. I caused all the trouble, my boy, by seeking to avoid discussion of a matter which was bound to be misconstrued. I mean Josephine Holcroft's trouble with Baron Laszlo, her husband. Laszlo neglected her for a year, and during this period I saw her almost daily at my sister's house in London. Josephine loathed notoriety and publicity, yet she was determined to leave Laszlo, who attended political meetings and associated with the riffraff of London as a zealot of some kind.

"Having filed proofs of Laszlo's neglect and arranged to secure a divorce from him, Josephine left the children with her people and quietly departed for Paris with my sister. I followed on the next boat and the gossips immediately spread reports of an elopement. Josephine lived with my sister in Paris until she was granted a divorce from Laszlo. These facts are matters of record and I have the papers to prove my statements. But there was no publicity. Laszlo did not fight the case, as he was summoned home by his government, accused of intriguing against his own government. Instead of returning to Vienna, he disappeared, taking the two daughters with him.

"Lord Holcroft didn't believe in divorce, and when Josephine wrote him a complete explanation, he never answered the letter. This was after Josephine and I had been married five years. I worked hard as a sculptor and then did some por-

trait painting, but the work didn't pay me enough to support us and our two little girls, Alice and Aliénor. Eventually I raised some money and put it into speculations, where I lost every dollar I had. The babies had big blue eyes and yellow hair like Josephine's. I tried hard to get some work from my old patrons but luck was against me for years. Our neighbor wanted Josephine to go to America to take a place as a sort of governess on a plantation in Virginia, where she was going to visit her sister. Josephine thought it would be a good place for the children. As I had no money for travel, I was to stay behind and try to get on my feet financially, but I hated to see them take the children away.

"Probably you've never had any children of your own, my boy, so you don't know how they wind themselves around your heart-strings. I tried in a weak sort of way to get the notion of going away out of Josephine's mind; but her friend persuaded her all the time. She kept pointing to our lack of money to educate the children! . . . Good God, my boy! I wanted to do everything in the world for them but luck was against me. I told them again and again that I was sure to get started soon; then Josephine would remind me that luck had been against me ever since we were married. She thought more of those two children, though, than she did of her two Laszlo daughters, Marie and Blanche. And she was crazy to get them over to America.

"I didn't seriously believe that Josephine would really go against my wishes, but when she decided to leave I didn't have enough money to keep us another month, and as our neighbor told her, something had to be done. The neighbor had some money and arranged for passage for herself and Josephine and, of course, the children.

"Well, we stood there at the depot, waiting for the train that would take them to the seaboard, and somehow, none of us wanted to say anything; but I can remember the feeling of little Alice's hand and Aliénor's weak fingers clutching mine while we were waiting.

"'Come along, Josephine,' said the neighbor. 'Here is the train. Good-bye, Monsieur Champfleury! We'll let you hear from us from the other side — I'll send you the address.'

"Josephine and my daughter Alice cried a little, but the baby laughed and crowed; she didn't know what it was all about and Alice only had a vague notion that something was wrong. I was glad of that because they have trouble enough after they grow up — anyway, you know how I felt about leaving the children. I swallowed hard — trying to hide my feelings.

"After they had gone and I was alone in the house, I thought hard and I made up my mind to strive and strive until I had money enough to send for them. I determined to work day and night if necessary. I rose early and I worked over can-

vases until late into the night. You know that work doesn't always improve the bank account. It's the customers and sales that matter in the bringing in of funds. My first sale after the family left brought me four hundred dollars, American money. I thought of Josephine — and the children — I could send for them soon. The next sale brought five hundred dollars. Then — I received a letter from America."

The old man was silent — staring at the floor. He rapped his cane on the hardwood floor, as if aiming to crush some ugly insect. I struck a match and lighted a cigar at which I puffed silently before I spoke.

"This letter from America," Mr. Champfleury," I said; "it was from your wife, wasn't it?"

With a bony finger the old man was tracing the windings of a colored thread in the fabric of his heavy coat.

"No," said the old man slowly. "No — it was not from Josephine. It was from our former neighbor. The letter began with a lot of regrets, saying how sorry she was that things had to be as they were, but that Josephine had died and left the children to her as their legal guardian. They thought she died of grief because of her doubt as to whether she had done right in divorcing Laszlo and leaving the other two daughters. The old lady said she wasn't going to give up the children

because she could do so much more for them than I could; and that I needn't try to find them, as she wasn't going to leave me any address."

There was another silence — the bony hand clutching the stout cane; the trembling arm beating up and down, sounding a noisy tattoo with the cane on the polished floor.

"My boy," the tremulous voice continued, "I have never heard another word about my wife and children. After all these years — no information of any kind — no answer to all the letters I wrote. They didn't leave the faintest clue. It would have made any man reckless and half crazy.

"I suppose people were right in saying that I lost my grip. Day in and day out I was worrying — worrying — couldn't keep my wife and children out of my thoughts. I cursed myself for a fool and suspected that Josephine had found some other man in America and had taken this method of ridding herself of me. The more I thought about it, the more it seemed improbable that this neighbor would assume the responsibility and expense of raising my children. This only strengthened my jealous suspicions. Anybody will tell you that worry will unfit a man for work quicker than anything else. I couldn't find out whether they had gone to Virginia or not, or how the children were being cared for. Sometimes I'd waken out of my sleep nights, dreaming that they were sick or dead — with my heart hammering.

Once I wrote to a detective agency and sent them a large sum to tell me where they were and if they were all right. They waited six months; then they wrote me that they had learned nothing and were still investigating; that it would take more money to continue the search; and I sent them more money."

He raised his trembling hand to his jerking and distorted features and grimaced horribly.

"Then I had no more money. Necessity developed my ability to make the so-called lightning sketches which I was hired to produce nightly in the Paris theatres. From there I drifted to Vienna and Berlin, making a precarious living as an entertainer with my caricatures and colored pictures. Drink went with the life as the years wore on; gradually I became a useless sot. Suppose you had lost your wife and children and had your happiness destroyed through no fault of your own! Suppose you had lost your grip from worry and heartache like I had — just ask yourself, my boy, would you have been able to put aside the insidious liquor in which I drowned my sorrow? I sought forgetfulness in the cup that cheers, thinking that time would bring forgetfulness. Can you blame me for feeling like I did?"

I did not answer. I did not venture to judge this man — I only pondered. Again the heavy cane sounded its tap, tap, tap on the hard polished floor. The man drew a faded daguerreotype from

his pocket, gazed at it with softening eyes, while a tear splashed upon the glass facing. He passed it to me.

It was the likeness of a young woman. She was evidently English — Josephine Holcroft, to judge by the inscription, "To my dear Guillaume, from Josephine." And she was very lovely, with fair skin, waving hair and large slumbrous eyes. The heavy plate was enclosed in a gold frame.

"My wife," he said, as I silently returned the picture.

The old man drew a long, tired breath and went on:

"For years I traveled from place to place, always making good money but spending as much as I could for liquor. In spite of myself, I saved a little. Then the time came when I could no longer make my pictures. Liquor had me hopelessly in its grasp. I had drifted along the Balkan peninsula and stopped in Cetinje. Here I met the man who believed that I had stolen his wife. The man returned good for evil, taking me into his home and nursing me back to health and strength; but his remarkable achievement was the complete eradication of the drink habit. His treatment was simple but efficacious. Molasses and port wine were his only drugs, but the strict administrations of regular doses caused me to lose all desire for liquor of the fiery sort.

"Often in my delirium I had said enough to enable him to learn my identity. When I was

able to leave him he told me that Father Dabor, as he was known, was the Baron Laszlo. My good friend described the manner in which his sympathy with the democratic aspirations of his people had caused him to seek refuge in Montenegro when he was exiled from Austria. After he made himself known to me, he told me that Josephine had written to him from America before she died, asking about her daughters.

"From Father Dabor I learned that my children, Alice and Aliénor, had been adopted by Randolph Shore, a wealthy Virginian who married the neighbor who took Josephine to America. Randolph Shore investigated and learned that I was a drunken performer, and not a fit person to have the custody of my two daughters."

I jumped to my feet.

"Why, that was Aunt Eleanor's name before —"

He raised his hand, interrupting me.

"Both Randolph Shore and his wife, Margaret Shore, are dead. Alice married a doctor named Jones and they came to California, bringing Aliénor with them.

"That much I learned from Father Dabor before I left him. Then I came to America and put what money I had into a lead mine with the prospector who owned the claim and came to Denver looking for a partner. I went to Colorado — and the lead-poison got me. That is where I made a little money."

I allowed him to take his own time in reaching the facts I wished to learn. He continued:

"Everything comes too late in life, doesn't it, my boy? Seven years ago I thought that just to be rich would bring me every happiness. I'm not rich now — but I was well-fixed when I left Colorado. Since then the doctors have got it all. What good did the money do me? Absolutely none! . . . Just think, my boy! When I reached San Francisco the detectives learned that Doctor Jones had gone for a sea-trip, and shortly after that they told me that the doctor and his wife — my daughter Alice — were dead. And they could find no trace of Aliénor."

The old man rose unsteadily and reached for his hat.

"Wait!" I said, blowing my nose violently to hide my feelings. "Have you any records — any information to verify your story — which I could show to your daughter Aliénor if she is located?"

He grinned and rolled his head in merriment.

"Sure!" he said. "I paid the detectives for that! I'm going back to the sanitarium — here is the address. The doctor says I may be entirely cured in time — when all the lead is out of my system. Come to see me! Good-night!"

After the visit from the old man I went to see him at the hospital. With the records which he furnished, I went to Sacramento and conferred

with Aunt Eleanor. At last I knew why she never discussed her ancestry; why she spoke such excellent French; why my mother always spoke of my father's gentility — never of her own ancestry. It became my duty to furnish proof of what my reader already knows. It were a waste of time to detail the whole of it; and so, without prejudice to the verity of my account, I shall skip much that is repetitional and give the facts as I have assembled them out of what I learned from Guillaume Champfleury before he died. The old man lived only long enough to spend his last days with his daughter, Aunt Eleanor. Then the poison did its work and he was laid to rest.

From Guillaume Champfleury I learned that I was the grandson of Baron Laszlo by his eldest daughter Marie, who came to California with Ladislav Lamsdorff long before he and his wife established their residence in Berkeley. The Lamsdorffs went back to Europe, and my mother remained in California, having married my father — a man considerably her senior. Then he died and, singularly, her two half-sisters — Aunt Eleanor and Mrs. Jones — rented the lower floor of her house. As each family was reluctant to discuss its family skeleton, neither discovered the relationship.

Blanche Laszlo, my mother's younger sister, married Stephen Kyralyi in Austria. He deserted her and masqueraded as Stephen Carroll in America, where he met my mother without knowing her

maiden name. Nor had my mother ever seen him before, or heard of her sister's marriage and subsequent desertion. She only received word of Blanche's death through the authorities.

My business was flourishing and I found tenants to whom I leased both the Romanov and Philomela's adjoining ranch. All mail addressed to them was handled by me under power of attorney instruments. As a proxy voter and also as a stockholder, I was notified of the annual meeting of the Sierra Madre Gold Mining Company which was to be held in the City of San Francisco, in accordance with the by-laws of that corporation.

The purpose of the meeting was to ratify the actions of the directors during the fiscal year ending April first, and to elect officers for the ensuing year. Prior to the shareholders' meeting, the out-going directors opened the box in which Stephen Carroll — formerly president of the company — had kept his valuable papers, and of whose death they had received confirmation.

Among the papers left by Carroll they found affidavits as to his past, in which he accepted full responsibility for the wrong he had done his wife and son, known as Janos Kyralyi.

The papers set forth that, owing to the report that his son was a dangerous man who had openly avowed his intention to kill his father on sight, Carroll had decided to change his name from Kyralyi to Carroll. He had engaged in the min-

ing business under that name in California and Mexico. Later he received a letter, advising him of the death of his wife. There were other letters and papers, as well as affidavits, properly witnessed, to verify these facts.

A letter which required the action of the directors of the Sierra Madre Gold Mining Company, was already two years old. The secretary read the following letter, in which Stephen Carroll said:


" To the Officers and Directors,

" The Sierra Madre Gold Mining Company. .

" Gentlemen:

" In this envelope you will find bill of sale, deed of gift, and assignment of interest, as the case may be; these papers are intended to convey all my stock in your company to my daughter-in-law, Mrs. Gabrielle Kyralyi. I have taken this method of transferring the stock instead of leaving it by will, in order to avoid the publicity of probate procedure and possible legal delays. Please observe that the documents were witnessed and recorded in San Francisco.

" You are, therefore, instructed to convey to this lady all my holdings in your company represented by the shares of stock, certificates for which are attached to the bill of sale, and duplicates in lieu of those which have been hypothecated by me to Ivan Romanov — also a stockholder in the company. These amount to the par value of \$500,000.00, the market value of which, at this date, is fifty cents per share, or \$250,000.00. My investment in your company represents all my property, both personal and real, with



the exception of a few hundred dollars which I have on hand for incidental expenses.

"Mrs. Kyralyi, my daughter-in-law, was Gabrielle Ghica before her marriage to my son — Janos Kyralyi. Her father was Demeter Ghica, of Ragusa, Province of Dalmatia, Austria-Hungary. Mrs. Kyralyi is a professional singer — known to the public as Philomela, the Zagrab houri. She was married to my son by Father Dabor in the city of Cetinje, Montenegro.

"Believing that she is a good and capable woman, better able to handle a large bequest than my son, I have assigned my property to her, believing that she will see that he is properly provided for during his life. Mrs. Kyralyi does not know that she is my daughter-in-law, but I have been kept posted as to my son's career, and have seen Gabrielle a number of times — ostensibly on business, and incidentally selling her some stock in the company.

"In the event of my death, it is my wish that all my possessions of every name, nature or description revert to her. In this envelope you will find the papers, duly acknowledged and recorded, and an order for the transfer of my stock to her. It is my hope that this will be accomplished without obstacle of any kind; but in the event that in the opinion of your directors such procedure is irregular, you will please so notify Father Dabor, of Cetinje, of your intentions. He has been provided with copies of these papers, with instructions to proceed as may be necessary in the event that my directions are incompatible with the policy of your directors.

"Respectfully submitted,

"STEPHEN KYRALYI (Hungarian),

"STEPHEN CARROLL (English)."

The stockholders flocked into the room — Italians, Greeks, Slavonians, Frenchmen and Americans from every walk of life drifted in — laughing and chatting together.

Just then the directors filed into the room, and the vice-president, who had acted as president since Carroll's demise, greeted the stockholders cordially. His figure was large and impressive. One by one he waved them to chairs. Still laughing, still chatting, they all seated themselves.

I found a seat in the rear of the room.

The large, impressive man, in his capacity as chairman of the meeting, rapped on the table.

The secretary passed around a list, upon which each one present indicated the number of shares he represented. It was announced that the assemblage constituted a quorum in accordance with the by-laws, and the fact was duly entered on the minutes.

The chairman again rapped for order.

"The stockholders of the Sierra Madre Gold Mining Company will please come to order," he said, clearing his throat.

The little knots scattered. All were seated.

"The secretary will please read the minutes of the last meeting of the stockholders and the minutes of the directors' meeting, just adjourned," the chairman directed.

There followed a monotonous reading of trivial procedures, followed by the minutes recording the

passing of five hundred thousand shares of the stock to Mrs. Gabrielle Kyralyi — transferred from Stephen Carroll's name, in compliance with the documents which had just been examined — and the report of the directors that the proxies held by James Oyler were valid and sufficient in all respects to confer upon him legal authority to vote the stock.

"If there is no objection," the chairman announced, "the minutes will stand approved as read."

He waited for a moment, glancing around the room.

"And it is so ordered," he said.

He whispered with the secretary, then with each of the directors beside him, examining a copy of the by-laws.

"The next business in order is the report of the secretary," said the chairman, and again he cleared his throat.

And the secretary's report followed. A motion that the report be filed was seconded and declared carried.

"The next business in order is the election of officers for the ensuing year," proceeded the chairman, in his carefully carried out monotone — but he glanced up uneasily.

As he finished a Frenchman got up.

"Mr. Chairman," he began, "all the present directors are present. The vacancy occasioned by

the death of our former president has not been filled." After a pause he went on:

"I move that the present Board be unanimously re-elected by the stockholders of this meeting, and that the remaining vacancy be filled by a separate nomination and election."

An Italian raised his hand.

"Second the motion," he said.

The chairman rose again.

"It has been moved and seconded,—" here the chairman stated the motion. "Are you ready for the question?"

At this point one of the stockholders called out, "Question," and the chairman proceeded:

"It is moved and seconded that the motion which has just been made be adopted. So many as are in favor of the motion will signify their assent by saying 'Aye.'" A vociferous "Aye" responded. "Contrary minded?" he asked, but there was no reply and he said: "the 'Ayes' have it; the motion is carried. The secretary will please comply with the by-laws by having each director so re-elected accept by his written consent to act for the ensuing year."

The signatures were soon secured. The chairman was speaking:

"Nominations are now in order for the remaining vacancy on the Board of Directors, after which, in accordance with the provisions of the by-laws, one of the directors will be nominated

and elected president for the ensuing year. The Board elects its own officers with the exception of the president, who is chosen by a vote of the stockholders."

"Mr. Chairman," called a voice from the far end of the room.

"The gentleman with the pompadour has the floor," said the chairman, and a titter went round the room. One of my customers was standing.

"Stephen Carroll held a controlling interest in the stock of this company. These shares have been transferred to Mrs. Gabrielle Kyrallyi, but a large amount of the stock is held as collateral security by the Romanovs. Mr. James Oyler, besides his personal holdings in the company, has the Romanov and Kyrallyi proxies. We should not wish to place Mr. Oyler in the embarrassing position of voting for himself, although it would be his duty to do so in order that he may be assured that his clients are properly represented and protected. The directors may go on with their plans, uninterrupted. The present chairman may continue in charge in the capacity of vice-president. In view of these circumstances, I shall ask for a second to the motion which I am about to make. I move that Mr. James Oyler be unanimously nominated and elected president of this corporation!"

A chorus responded, seconding the motion.

The chairman went through his formula of parliamentary jargon and I was declared unanimously

elected president of the Sierra Madre Gold Mining Company. Then a motion to adjourn was carried.

There was a hubbub at once. In the midst of the uproar around me the large, impressive man pushed his way through the crowd and congratulated me. He pointed to the name on the door of what had been Stephen Carroll's private office.

"I'll have your name done on the door this afternoon," he laughed.

After much scraping of chairs the few who delayed had filed out and I left the office for the day.

The next day I thought of my boyish dreams. What good fairy had whisked me away to the surroundings I had pictured for my future? I now ruled a sumptuous mining office suite, with "President" on the door of my private office, which was carpeted with softest velvet to harmonize with the mahogany furniture. And in the corner stood, already, a well-filled bag of polished golf-clubs!

CHAPTER XI

THE BARON AND THE JEWELS

Had it not been for my constant thoughts of Feodora and the desire to see her again, I should have been quite happy and satisfied with the realization of my business ambitions. But one fine day the demon of allurements presented himself before me in the insidious form of a letter from my grandfather.

Here is the letter:

" Mr. James Oyler,

" San Francisco, Cal., U. S. A.

" My dear sir:

" Pardon my delay in answering your letter which was held in Cetinje, pending my return from Sarajevo, where I was persuaded to remain longer than I had predetermined. I ask you to consider this letter in the spirit of a young and successful man, willing to read its solemn and momentous contents with the earnest and serious attention that is a courtesy usually accorded the aged — for I have passed my seventy-first year of life and my forty-second year in the priesthood as Father Dabor.

" My father was the first Baron Laszlo and I inherited the title. My wife was an English woman,

one of two daughters of Lord Holcroft. Susan Holcroft married Sir Richard Dugdale, a sea-faring man, and I married Josephine, the older of the daughters. It was in the year following the Seven Weeks' War between Austria and Prussia that I met her in London, where I was sent as a diplomatic agent of Austria.

"I shall not try to excuse myself for neglecting my beautiful young wife. How can such a thing be excused? She left me to go to France, where she afterwards married Guillaume Champfleury — leaving her two babies behind. I became *persona non grata* with the authorities at Vienna and was dismissed from the service. In my unhappy state of mind I placed Blanche and Marie in a convent, and entered the priesthood.

"When my daughters left the convent they separated, Blanche becoming the wife of Stephen Kyralyi, a Hungarian, and Marie accompanying Madame Lamsdorff, a talented young woman who had married a professor of Slavic languages, and who desired a congenial traveling companion during her trip to America. Stephen Kyralyi deserted Blanche after the boy Janos was born, and she died shortly afterward. Marie, through the associates of Professor Lamsdorff, met the old families of California and married your father in San Francisco, where you were born. I have learned that she, too, has passed away.

"Returning to the object of this letter, I am your grandfather and you and Janos Kyralyi are my only descendants as well as the only living blood relations. You are the child of my eldest daughter. Janos is the son of my second daughter and Stephen Kyralyi — who is now dead. Like father, like son! I need not particularize. Owing to his incorrigible

disposition, Janos has ever been a scapegrace — even a criminal. Since the policy at Vienna has changed, since my lands were forfeited to the State, I have assurances that these lands will be restored and the title of Baron revived.

"If the proposition appeals, I invite you to come to see me at Cetinje. As an old man who cannot make the journey, I yearn to see my grandson and depend upon your disposition to grant an old man's prayer and come to see Father Dabor, once the Baron Laszlo, your grandfather,

"ANTON LASZLO."

My first thought was to refuse, which I based on excellent reasons. As my agency business was a success, it would not be prudent to neglect it, while I saw no occasion to go a long distance in search of entanglements and alliances which had been of no benefit to me when I most needed assistance.

My next thought was of Feodora, for I had received a letter from her father in which he indicated no knowledge of his daughter's promise to marry me within the year. The thought of his disapproval began to shake my decision, and I weighed his obligation to me as a point whose weakness only attested to my indecision. Romanov was a wealthy man and his consent could be readily obtained had I the title of Baron Laszlo, which my grandfather intimated would be revived at his request. Though dazzled by this brilliant calculation, I strove to repress my desire of ac-

cepting the offer. Again I read Romanov's letter.

" Mr. James Oyler,

" San Francisco, Cal., U. S. A.

" My dear sir and friend:

" Thanks to your brilliant and timely suggestion, I reached Mexico without incident and in the course of time — Liverpool. I am safe in Europe and will soon be joined by my daughter, who has written me that she is now en route. It is a tremendous relief to know that I did not kill Kyralyi, although he returned kindness with ingratitude and richly deserved a worse fate. So far as I know, there was no investigation, for I reached New York without incident and arrived here in England in due time.

" Feodora has advised me that she gave you power of attorney, and as my death has been disproved, I am enclosing you herewith my own power of attorney, executed by a New York attorney. I wish to realize on the Sierra Madre Gold Mining Company stock which I hold as collateral security for loans made to Stephen Carroll. Please sell the stock and pay the overplus to the estate of Stephen Carroll, retaining the amount of the notes and interest for my account. You can advise me of what you have done by addressing me in care of Luigi Melloni, in Vienna, where I am going to live. Should this address fail to reach me, a letter in care of Professor Ladislav Lamsdorff, at Agram, will be forwarded by Feodora, as she attended the academy there, and the professor is in charge of the institution. She will doubtless visit the Lamsdorffs.

" Whenever you come to Europe do not fail to look

us up. But if I should never see you again, please remember that I shall always be grateful to you for your friendly offices when my liberty was in jeopardy.

"Faithfully yours,

"IVAN ROMANOV."

On receipt of this letter I had presented the engineer's report and begged Meriwether Huckstep to negotiate a loan, with the stock as collateral. This he had arranged, and from my business I withdrew the sum his associates desired as a margin. I then took over the stock and became the principal stockholder in the Sierra Madre Gold Mining Company in this manner. In my own defence, however, I wish to state that I did this long before the mines began producing the enormous profits which enabled me to retire my notes very rapidly.

A year passed and I still corresponded with Feodora regularly. As she avoided any definite promise as to the date of our marriage, I surmised that her father had more ambitious plans for her. This worried me constantly. I wrote several letters to Father Dabor, vaguely intimating my desire to visit him as soon as my business would permit me to do so. I fought against my inclination to drop my money-making opportunities, for I was rapidly becoming a wealthy man. Tired of the struggle, I at length formed my decision to go to Europe.

One fine day I entered into a partnership agreement with Rutledge and turned over the manage-

ment of my affairs to him. I merely explained the conditions, which he found very acceptable — I may add, most advantageous — and we reached an understanding. Rutledge then offered me his hand, I gave him mine, and this friendly sanction was the only agreement we made for this important affair, aside from the legal requirements. Though there was no forfeit on either side, no security or bond, never was a bargain better cemented. From that time, during all my long connection with Rutledge, I had many occasions of appreciating all the value of his word. I may say that he was one of the most conscientious men I ever had dealings with. In addition, Rutledge added an extreme affability and a remarkable degree of generosity and disinterestedness to the merit of keeping his word. Under all circumstances he possessed the most delightful urbanity, and one of the most brilliant qualities he displayed as my partner was his uniform courtesy to all.

A fortnight had scarce elapsed since my arrangement with Rutledge when, after an uneventful journey, I disembarked at Havre. On the moment of my arrival I wrote to Feodora, informing her that I contemplated an automobile trip through the country. In the meanwhile, having nothing better to do, I walked about daily, investigating the various models and finally purchasing one of the latest French motor-cars. Before I left Havre a letter came from Baron Laszlo, in reply to mine — written before I left San Fran-

cisco. In his letter Father Dabor spoke of political disturbances in the Balkan peninsula and the Slav dream of a South Slav kingdom within the Austrian domains, with Agram as the capital. He informed me that Janos Kyralyi had joined an old confederate who was suspected of treason against the monarchy. He advised me to refrain from mentioning any connection with him at this time, and warned me against acknowledging the acquaintance of Janos Kyralyi, my cousin. I destroyed the letter and set out across the country in my new machine.

On a beautiful afternoon in June I motored into Vienna, after a trip through France and Germany. My intention was to try to locate Luigi Melloni, who had never received my letters. In the event that I was unsuccessful, I intended to travel amid the grassy hillocks along the winding stream that leads toward Gratz, Marburg and then — Agram — where Feodora would be visiting the Lamsdorffs.

Luigi Melloni's address did not appear in the directories of Vienna. I resolved to inquire at the theatres where he was well-known as a bandmaster. I was told that most of the theatres were closed and the musicians were at the resorts. Only in the cafés chantants were crowded pleasure-seekers from many lands, laughing, drinking, talking and singing — pleasure-seekers who found Vienna the rallying point for races and for trade, serving as the common meeting-place of all Ger-

many and the countries of the East. A chance acquaintance begun in one of the cafés brought the information that Luigi Melloni had last performed with his band at Miramar.

During the mornings I strolled through the "Ville" with its winding streets and tiny squares crowded with ancient land-marks, and still instinct with the life and spirit of the old monarchy. In the afternoons I motored through the Prater and along the Ringstrasse, viewing the array of majestic buildings, such as is nowhere else to be found.

At night the polished tiles of the Cathedral shone in the brilliant moonlight. I walked on the Graben with its broadside of shops. I recalled my apprenticeship with Luigi Melloni, and while giving a sympathetic thought to that excellent friend, I compared his routine life with my care-free existence, his modest claims on fortune with the magnificent prospects promised me; and I could not help yielding to a feeling of noble pride when I remembered I owed this position solely to my wits and to my business acumen. Then, finding myself the grandson of a baron, and my financial success assured, I experienced an indefinable comfort, and were it not for the fear of making a pun, I would add at this moment I felt that I had "arrived." I fancied that the very passers-by regarded me with a certain degree of satisfaction; and in this infantile illusion I smiled upon them most benignantly.

I paused at the entrance to one of the few theatres that continued through the summer months. Vienna, in its silks and laces, diamonds and decorations, its gorgeous uniforms, gold lace, pomps and vanities, was flowing up the stairways and into the boxes. It formed of itself an exhibition almost as dazzling as the exquisitely costumed dancers on the stage. They were beautiful and graceful, and trained to the highest degree of perfection in their art. Then a mimic appeared; he was taking off some familiar types of Viennese. The performance did not interest me. The mimic concluded with a song:

"O, du lieber Augustin, Augustin, Augustin, Augustin,

O, du lieber Augustin, alles ist hin!

Geld ist weg, mäd'l ist weg, alles weg, alles weg!

O, du lieber Augustin, alles ist hin!"

I went out to the entrance which was crowded with people from the street; Hungarian officers in boots and skin-tight pantaloons, laced and ornamented, promenaded in the foyer; there were turbaned Turks wearing the crescent on their backs; artists with peaked hats; girls in scarlet skirts, embroidered bodices and caps of gold cloth. An Austrian officer loitered near the doorway with a glass stuck in one eye, hair parted in the middle with the part reaching the back of his neck. I addressed him in French, and he was very affable. He spoke of the performers, expressing his

regret that I had not heard Madame Kyralyi! I indicated only casual interest and he assured me that she was a wonderful contralto. Only recently she sang in Vienna; now she was in Belgrade. I decided to motor to Belgrade and have an interview with Philomela before turning toward Agram and then Cetinje.

I was proceeding toward Belgrade when Austria declared war against Serbia, and I was turned back at the border. I lost all of my belongings, including my automobile which had been commandeered by the Austrians. At Semlin I was taken to a guard-house and rigidly cross-examined before I was permitted to continue. I proceeded by cart toward Vienna and saw a party of Austrian engineers planting mines along the road. I took another route. I was without money or baggage, had been held as a spy amid scenes of danger and warfare, and made my way into Vienna on foot, seeking an interview with American Ambassador Penfield.

Hundreds of Americans, surprised by events in Europe, hurried to Vienna from nearby points, all anxious to get out of the country. The American Embassy was powerless. Paper money was worthless. I saw a woman with two children offering twenty-five hundred dollars' worth of checks, for which she could receive no cash. I soon discovered that my letters of credit and express checks were useless. Regular customers at the hotels and restaurants who did not have gold

or silver were politely invited to sign bills for payment at some future day, as no currency could be given in exchange for notes or checks. Strangers were compelled to pay their bills in currency, as neither checks nor notes were acceptable.

I was unable to get a hearing at the Embassy, which I found crowded with Americans. I visited the Wiener Bankverein; they declined to honor any checks. Even the Austrian National Bank refused to cash my express checks. It was a waste of time to try to cash any paper. Then I remembered that Melloni's real name was Luigi Ghica! Of course his name was in the directory and I found him at his house. The shining hair I remembered was touched with gray, but the little black eyes sparkled with pleased recognition as he pressed my hand.

"Dick!" he exclaimed, as he embraced me. "How glad I am to see you! But why are you here — what are you doing?"

"Not Dick," I laughed, "but Jimmy Oyler! When Dugdale apprenticed his son, Dick Dugdale, to you, he delivered another boy named Jimmy Oyler and for four years I kept the secret —"

Luigi interrupted me.

"You must tell me all about it. Come into the house where we shall be more at ease."

After leading me into the pretty drawing-room, Luigi made me sit down by his side on a sofa.

"Now, my friend, let us talk, for we must have a great deal to tell each other."

"Yes, let us talk," I said; "for I confess that my curiosity is strongly excited. I fancy at times I am dreaming, for I have been in Vienna some time, and never thought to look for you except as Luigi Melloni until today."

"I will bring you back to real life," Luigi continued, "by saying that I have heard of the young man who aspires to the hand of the fairest lady I have ever seen. Let us begin with poor Romanov."

I made a movement of pained surprise.

"What do you say, Luigi?" I stared at him. "Can our friend —?"

"No, no," he interrupted. "Romanov is not dead; but he has interested himself in the South Slav movement against Austria. Gabrielle has seen Janos, her husband, who is intriguing against the monarchy while posing as a loyal Hungarian. He is under the influence of Petar Vuco, the man who received him into his house that night when he married Gabrielle."

"The man with the hawk-like nose and a blue scar on his chin!" I exclaimed, in sudden rush of recollection.

"The same!" cried Luigi. "Vuco is a Slav, as is Romanov, and he has induced great-hearted Romanov to forget his grievance against Janos and to join hands with them in their common

cause against Austria. Romanov has contributed large sums of money to further Slavic interests in the southern part of the monarchy."

"But Feodora!" I said. "Where is she now?"

"She went to Sarajevo with her father," Luigi said. "I fear for her safety, as she will be harshly dealt with in the event that her father is pronounced an enemy of Austria."

I rose immediately and explained my reasons for leaving so abruptly by indicating my desire to be off at once for Sarajevo to find Feodora. I told him, however, of my fruitless attempts to cash my express checks, and I had scarcely ended when Madame Melloni entered the room. My friend's wife received me most kindly, saying:

"I feel that I have known you, sir, for a long time, as Luigi often spoke of you, which caused me to feel the greatest interest, and my husband and myself often regretted we could not hear of you. Now, however, Mr. Oyler," she added, "that we have found you, consider yourself an old friend of the family and come to see us often."

I regretted my inability to profit by this kind invitation and explained my wish to be off as soon as I could secure the necessary funds. Luigi then accompanied me down the street and succeeded in finding a friend who accommodated me with gold for my checks. Having received a paper in exchange for my automobile, I presented

it and demanded compensation, receiving another machine in lieu of the one which had been commandeered by the Austrians.

Melloni was inclined to believe that the great army of Americans who had been trapped in war-swept Europe would head for Berlin and Paris. Here Melloni thought they would be detained indefinitely should the war spread to Germany, France and Russia. I suggested the possibility of escaping through Italy with Feodora. Luigi believed that I should motor to the Adriatic Coast, where passage to Italy — a neutral country — could be engaged. He strongly urged me to beware of Janos's treachery to the Romanovs, advising me to get them away from the field of Janos's activities. A short time after this conversation my walk with Luigi terminated. I took leave of this good friend and started for my hotel.

The next morning Luigi called at my hotel in considerable excitement. He told me that he had received a letter from an Italian musician in Milan, to whom he had sent some pawn tickets which called for the Laszlo jewels which were pawned by Janos, and which Philomela had asked him to redeem many months ago. The Italian learned from the money-lender of Milan that a Viennese Jew was the present holder of the twenty opals and other jewels pledged by Janos Kyrallyi. He invited me to accompany him in search of the jewels, surmising that I would like to see them.

On leaving the Graben, we crossed the Hoher-Markt into the Jews' street. It was dirty, dark, gloomy, with the forbidding aspect of a Ghetto of bygone days. The houses were a sickening color and the window-panes were covered with a gray, sticky, ooze-like slime. The shop we sought was like a cave. Outside, in compact groups, the Jews were bargaining, selling and reselling, beating down, counting, speculating, with many gesticulations and much jabbering of Israelitish patois. Ear-rings, watch-chains, rings, strings of coral, clocks and watches — they passed from one to the other.

Luigi presented the paper upon which was written the name of the dealer he sought. An old Jew presented himself. He was unwashed, uncombed, clad in a long, black, greasy surtout and a high hat, and his large flat ears were half hidden beneath long side-locks which fell from either temple; he had a pointed beard and pale blue eyes.

He led the way into his shop. We followed, pushing our way through lines of old shoes strung together, tattered silk dresses, moth-eaten furs, all mixed indiscriminately with new liveries, long cloaks of the kind worn by priests, and military uniforms.

The Jew led us upstairs where he kept his jewels in a strong-box. The interior of the shop was unspeakably squalid. As we ascended the steps, the rickety banister stuck to my fingers, and the walls on either side oozed. The ceiling

of the small, dark room was covered with soot, the furniture crowded closely together. On a crooked chest of drawers rested a great iron chest. Behind it sat another Jew watching. Together they opened the chest, unlocking two locks, a key to each lock being furnished by one and then the other partner. This arrangement prevented the opening of the chest by either unless in the presence of the other.

One by one the Jews examined the pawn tickets, bringing forth the twenty opals set in stick-pins, rings and cuff-links; the Patek-Phillippe watch; the gold cigarette-case monogrammed in rubies; and Gabrielle's rings — diamonds, emeralds and sapphires — as well as the necklace of oriental pearls.

After bargaining for an hour Luigi paid them gold for twice the amount of the pawn tickets. Luigi congratulated himself upon having arrived at a time when gold was scarce. Philomela had authorized him to pay three times what he gave the Jews.

Luigi listened to the patter of the Jews as he wrapped his jewels into a neat parcel. In the dark room the two money-lenders — with their backs turned — were dividing the gold and gloating over the profits of the trade.

"What rejoicings!" cried the yellow-haired Jew, who watched. "The 'Gois' throw their moneys to the children of Israel!"

"We will eat a lamb!" chuckled the older man,

stroking his pointed beard. "Soon the Israelites will have the wealth of the world!"

"They will then rebuild Yerouchoulam in the promised land," the other declared. "In a fine new city the Meschiach might well come!"

The old man rubbed his lean hands together and nodded, mumbling:

"I want to live near Solomon's Temple!"

We made our way down the rickety stairway and hurried from the Jews' street. On our way I announced my desire to depart for Sarajevo that afternoon. Luigi then proposed that I carry the jewels to Romanov, who was in communication with Belgrade. From Sarajevo Romanov would probably go to Servia, where he could deliver the jewels to Philomela — which would be safer than the mails in time of war. This I readily agreed to do, especially since Melloni secured papers for me, passing me as his messenger to Sarajevo. He also suggested that I darken my red hair with walnut-stain to avoid being conspicuous. I adopted the suggestion, and as my beard was already two days old, I decided to allow it to grow. I then engaged a German chauffeur and bade farewell to my old friend, setting out for Sarajevo.

We had passed the tiny mills suspended over the streams that meet the river Lasva; passed the box-like huts raised high on piles with their small solid wheels turning horizontally under water;

passed the Bosnian workers, busy making sun-dried brick in the broiling sun.

My chauffeur was hot and ill-humored. Changes had taken place since last he visited Sarajevo. More and more the old order of things had been swept away — to replace the Asiatic by the European. But nearly two hundred mosques still marked the presence of the Moslems who still gathered in compact masses before the mosques. My chauffeur commented crustily on these changes. And so, fuming, I left him at a hotel in Sarajevo, to search for the White Eagle where Luigi told me to look for Romanov.

The sun was scorching. I took pains to walk in the thin strip of shade along the street. I was passing a bazaar and paused to watch a Sarajevo crowd. It was glittering, mysterious, crafty, praying, singing, intriguing, assassinating, looking to east and west, watchful and full of fanaticism, I thought.

A striking figure swaggered down the street in all the bravery of an Austrian uniform of robin's-egg blue. A veiled woman stepped out of a group of trousered maidens and confronted the soldier. The maidens, in astonishment, half dropped their protecting drapery from before their faces.

The woman before the uniformed man had a beautiful figure, and when she removed her veil her eyes showed beautiful blue-gray. Young,

perhaps twenty-five, she was slightly painted, and her eyebrows and long curling lashes were blackened. Her features were perfect, her complexion was smooth and brilliant, and her expression was adorable.

Then I caught a glimpse of a little watery eye and another rolling uncontrolled in its socket. The soldier had stopped when the girl approached. It was Janos Kyralyi! I pulled my hat low over my eyes, displaying my darkened hair, and buried my week's growth of beard in my collar. Janos glanced around but he did not appear to recognize me.

"Janos!" said the woman in a low voice. "Are you not pleased to see me again?"

"You!" muttered Janos.

"I love you, Janos," she began. "Won't you take me with you? I am your wife and I have been very lonely since my father died."

"You!" breathed Janos heavily.

"Ah, you do not love me," she said. "It is true, then, what they have said. Say it is not true, Janos," she pleaded.

"Go away!" he growled, recovering himself. "I do not wish to see you again!"

The beauty regarded him sorrowfully.

"Then life can never mean anything to me again," she said mournfully.

She moved her hand under her draperies — her garments rustled — and the hand that was withdrawn grasped a long dagger. Janos stood fasci-

nated while she raised the weapon high. Swiftly it descended — straight to her heart — and Janos took to his heels, with the screams of the trousered maidens urging him to greater speed.

Without knowing why, I followed him, wondering that he did not look back.

The dead woman had spoken to him in French. The maidens did not understand. I looked back and saw them bearing her away. No one pursued. How could they accuse him?

Turning to the next street, Janos slackened his pace and joined a group of picturesque Turks outside a mosque which they were entering. He contented himself with a glance at the shady courtyard and the inevitable fountain, as he knew of the edict which forbade entrance by Christians. He moved on into another street and I noticed his returning swagger.

From across the street, I saw him approach an ancient church, shut away from the business street within a shady court where, beneath the loggia, there were arrangements for out-of-door services. Janos entered the church and I followed him into the court and peeped into a side window which was swung back.

Inside, the name of Christ was outlined in colored lights upon the wall. The interior was small, dark. An iconostasis divided the choir into two parts; the doors of the partition were adorned with sculptured images of saints and martyrs. From the inner part which contained the altar

a priest emerged and greeted Janos kindly. I could hear their conversation very plainly, but my slight knowledge of German made it difficult for me to understand them. Janos was inquiring for news of Father Dabor, who had preceded this priest in this church. Then he urged the priest to use his influence with Father Dabor to influence him to aid Janos toward advancement as the heir of Baron Laszlo.

"What political beliefs could have been so disastrous to Baron Laszlo's career?" I heard Janos inquire.

After what seemed a long time, the priest spoke:

"Baron Laszlo, whose ancestors had been soldiers, was the first diplomatic agent of his race, and he had no aptitude for the sharp practices of the envoys and ambassadors. But he was interested in the welfare of the masses, regardless of race or nation. He investigated the development of communism in France, because the idea of common ownership of the agents of production appealed to him; because he favored some approach to equality in the distribution of the products of industry.

"At this time Ferdinand Lassalle, a German Jew, was advocating the annulment of private ownership of land and capital. Karl Marx, as a journalist in England, was publishing broadcast the doctrine that all values were the creation and just due of labor. Baron Laszlo discussed these

subjects freely, frequenting the meetings held by thinkers who favored a policy that aimed at a more equal distribution and a better production of wealth by means of the direct action of the central authority.

"Baron Laszlo became a zealot and neglected his duties in connection with the Austrian office in London, for he had lost interest in monarchies. He believed that kings and princes were opposed to an equal distribution of wealth according to the quality and amount of work done by the sharer. He believed that kings and princes favored wars for national aggrandizement and the annexation of lands. And Baron Laszlo believed thoroughly in the doctrine of the Count de St. Simon — a system in which the state would own all the property and the laborer would be entitled to share according to the quality and amount of his work.

"Baron Laszlo also neglected his pretty young wife; and when Guillaume Champfleury, a young artist, visited Baron Laszlo's salon to discuss their common beliefs, he found Laszlo's beautiful wife far more interested in his magnetic personality than she was in political doctrines. Then Champfleury found an opportunity to tell her that her eyes were like twin stars, that her hair was like spun gold, and her smiles like wandering sunbeams — and the lady was completely won.

"So the Baron Laszlo returned to his home one night, after having missed Champfleury at

their political meeting, and his housekeeper handed him a note — left by his beautiful young wife — in which she asked him to forgive and forget her, as she had decided to fly with Champfleury, leaving her two babies behind. Laszlo also found a note from the home office, dismissing him from the service and summoning him to Vienna. Of course, Laszlo did not return to Vienna; he disappeared, and that is all I can tell you of the Baron Laszlo."

The priest was silent. Janos said nothing — did not move. He heard the far-off sound of the "Rakoczy March" that sets the Hungarians ablaze and inflames them to thoughts of revolt against Austria. Janos was listening, his foot tapping sharply. The priest seemed to fear to look at him, for now the music seemed to terrify him. Janos rose and strode toward the doorway, where he paused and said:

"Petar Vuco's agents in Vienna have learned that Father Dabor has used his influence with General Deák to have the title revived and the lands restored. I am the blood heir of Baron Laszlo! There is no other! But who cares for titles — lands — when death is in the air!"

I saw him close the door behind him. The priest sat where he was for a moment. Then with an uncertain hand he felt in his breast and drew out a silver crucifix. He bent his head, kissed the cross, and fell upon his knees before the chair.

A stone turned under my foot and I turned sud-

denly, to find myself facing the approaching Janos. There was no way out of the court. I must betray myself should Janos question me! I had little time to reflect, but in the growing dark I doubted if he could recognize me. I resolved to fight my way out of the court. Janos guessed my intention and his appraising eye ranged up and down my six feet of stature. I was the taller but Janos was vastly heavier and a trained prize-fighter.

He approached silently, his fists clenched. I waited for the coming onslaught, my muscles tense. Then he leaped forward and struck a blow that must surely have killed me had it reached a vulnerable spot. The force of the blow almost paralyzed my arm but I clinched and managed to lift him off his feet. He struck with his free arm and my head swam as I whirled him round and round. Then I succeeded in tripping him and we both fell to the ground. Luck favored me. Janos's head struck the stone which had turned under my foot and I felt him go limp.

It was my turn to take to my heels, nor did I pause until I reached the hotel. My head was aching violently from the blow which must have done me serious injury had I not received it at such close quarters. I went to bed with no regrets, however, as I had learned something more concerning Baron Laszlo through the incident.

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CHAPTER XII

CONSPIRATORS

Remembering Father Dabor's forethought in warning me to refrain from acknowledging any acquaintance with Janos, my cousin, I resolved to avoid him in Sarajevo. But what if he should see me at the White Eagle? Although I doubted his recognizing me with my darkened hair, still, he might remember me as his antagonist in the fight at the church.

I summoned my German chauffeur, informed him that I would not require his services, and paid him for his time, allowing him a liberal sum to defray his return expenses should he desire to return to Vienna. He departed immediately, declaring that he detested Bosnia.

My next precaution was to visit a tailor who provided me with another suit of clothes. At another shop I purchased an artist's hat and a flowing tie. Returning to my hotel, I settled my bill and engaged quarters at another hostelry after having been shaved by a barber. Before presenting myself at the desk I visited the wash-room and rubbed walnut-stain into my skin, so that my face and neck were quite dark. I surveyed myself in

a mirror and observed a most remarkable change in my appearance. From a ruddy, fair-skinned, red-haired American, I was changed to a dark-haired, swarthy-skinned French artist. The time for my visit to the White Eagle had at length arrived.

The White Eagle seemed to be strangely alive with patrons for a hot afternoon. At three o'clock groups of soldiers were crowded about the bar. All the tables in the café were taken and knots of men were gathered about the door, or discussing war news on the sidewalk. The White Eagle was the headquarters for war news in Sarajevo.

The sawdust which had been evenly raked across the rough flooring was now banked about the walls and columns by the shuffling tread of many feet. The rough flooring resounded as the waiters moved about the room. A man rose and left the room and I dropped into the vacated chair. I was facing a table at which three soldiers were seated, exchanging sallies and ribald jokes.

A side door opened into the room and an officer entered, his broad square chin stuck out, his black eyes darting about alertly until he espied the vacant chair at the table of the three soldiers. The soldiers acquiesced respectfully when the officer offered to pay their score in exchange for their seats. That is what I thought, for the soldiers rose and turned up their chairs against the table just as the officer beckoned to an elderly,

clerical-looking man standing in the doorway. He wore spectacles, the lenses of which were conspicuously biconvex. Surely that was Professor Ladislav Lamsdorff, as I remembered him in Berkeley — older, but otherwise unchanged.

The officer shook hands with Lamsdorff and motioned him to a seat opposite his own at the rough deal table. The officer turned a well-bred glance in my direction, then shot a quick look to the other side. It was then that I saw the bluish chin-scar and instantly noted the hawk-like nose. This was Petar Vuco, of whom Luigi had spoken!

"Let us speak French; the waiters will not understand," said the officer, rapping on the table and beckoning a waiter. He ordered wine.

"Janos is late, Petar," observed Lamsdorff, as he settled into his chair.

Vuco half turned the vacant chair against the table, but Lamsdorff stayed his hand, rising at the same time to greet Kyralyi who was threading his way through the crowded tables. Those baffling eyes were almost covered by a bandage which encircled his head.

"Your bandaged head augurs ill-news!" cried Petar.

"Sit down and tell us about it," greeted Lamsdorff.

The waiter arranged the table and placed wine and glasses before them. Janos sat down, saying:

"Last night I stopped to speak to a priest for a few moments. While we were conversing I chanced to glance toward the window. I saw the shadow of a man's head and tried to get to him before he could escape from the court. I had said nothing of our plans, yet I wished to rid myself of any man who might be spying on me. The devil grappled with me, and I swear he was made of iron. I am a powerful man, as you know, but this fellow dashed me against a stone as if I were only a child in his hands. Then he escaped."

"Someone is watching your movements," ventured Lamsdorff, drumming nervously with his fingers on the table.

"Well, what of that?" cried the officer. "Janos has always taken his life in his hands by his entanglements with women! It does not concern us," he added reassuringly.

"What about Petar's efforts in your behalf?" Professor Lamsdorff resumed. "Vienna would be disposed to investigate your habits before restoring the Laszlo lands to you. Perhaps the spy was from Vienna."

"That is not at all unlikely," Janos hastened to say, settling back with a sigh of relief.

I saw what Janos feared. His own opinion was probably that some friend of the veiled woman had followed him. He had no intention of revealing to Lamsdorff his desertion of another wife.

"The testimony which you desire from me,"

Lamsdorff continued, "is very vague indeed. There was a daughter of Baron Laszlo older than your mother. Marie accompanied my wife to America, where she married a Californian named Oyler. In an accident off the coast of San Diego, a man named Huckstep prevented Romanov's daughter from being seriously burned. I had a friend look the man up, intending to reward him. The man asked for a tuition for his ward. The lad was sent to a school and when I next visited the institution, I learned that the lad was entered as James Oyler, Marie's son. But the boy ran away from the school without finishing. When he was again located, he was found to be the son of a drunken watchman named Dugdale. This lad was palmed off on the school under the name of Oyler. The inference is that Marie Laszlo died without issue. Huckstep disappeared and I dismissed the incident as an attempted humbug of some sort.

"My interest in your claims, Janos, is solely in the interest of my wife's niece, Gabrielle, who has never divorced you. I wish to see a reconciliation and the restoration of the Laszlo lands, in which she will, of course, share. I had hoped to aid my niece. Now comes this unfortunate war! The Austrian demand on Servia which precipitated the outbreak was not the spontaneous expression of the will of the people of the empire. A great part of them are Serbs and covertly in sympathy with the other side!"

Petar Vuco twisted his black mustache and glanced round uneasily.

"Not too loud," he muttered. "We may be overheard. I myself can overhear parts of conversations at the adjacent tables. Maybe they can hear you!"

Janos Kyrallyi raised his hand, dismissing Vuco's apprehensions with a flourish. With the other hand he raised his glass of wine, drained it, and poured another.

"There is no harm in what our friend says," he declared in a loud voice; "'tis common gossip!"

He raised his voice a trifle, yet the bombast was not overdone.

"At the table behind me they are discussing the Teutons. The German Minister of Foreign Affairs, von Jagen, is the subject of their conversation. It is von Jagen, they say, who plunged his country into a war with Russia, France and England! . . . Behind Petar they are conversing in Italian; one of the party has just said: 'It is a recognized fact among her statesmen that Italy either must maintain an alliance with Austria, or must immediately make war on her.' Everyone passes what news or opinions he has to someone else — otherwise there would be no conversation!"

At the conclusion of Janos's remarks, the men at the adjoining table who had been quoted left the room abruptly.

"They were easily routed," Janos chuckled.

"Because they share my opinion — that public discussion of politics is dangerous," insisted Petar Vuco.

"A private meeting would also be dangerous," said the professor. "Had it been noised about that Ladislav Lamsdorff, professor of Slavic languages, held a secret conference at a private meeting-place with two Austrian officers — one a Hungarian and the other a Slav — treason would have been suspected."

Vuco agreed, nodding his head impressively.

"In that respect you are right," he declared. "I merely counselled caution."

Professor Lamsdorff sipped his wine, stroked his black beard, cleared his throat as if about to speak, and regarded the two officers attentively. I called for more wine in a thick voice and breathed heavily, simulating the drunken condition which I had feigned from the beginning. Lamsdorff proceeded with confidence:

"What was this spy like?—"

Janos pondered.

"There was something familiar," he puzzled. "His skin was fair and ruddy and he wore a scant, sandy beard. There was a man named Abdul Hassan many years ago, in the employ of Reshad-Hamid, who would be about the same age. I could notice the resemblance. It may have been Hassan, the man who was wounded by Luigi Ghica in that affair at Ragusa."

"Aha!" exclaimed Petar Vuco.

"Aha-a-a!" I repeated drunkenly, closing my eyes and lolling my head.

Through half-opened lids I saw Vuco start and scowl darkly in my direction.

"Don't bother him," admonished Lamsdorff. "He's in a drunken sleep."

"Evidently," said Vuco, mollified.

"If Janos's suspicions as to the identity of the spy," Lamsdorff continued, "have any foundation in fact, what we wish to bring about may be oppugned by the presence of this man Hassan. Reshad-Hamid may arrive from Turkey at any moment. What assurance we can get from him remains to be discovered. We hope his country will remain neutral, but there is nothing certain. But of one thing we may be very certain — at the warning of Hassan he will mistrust the Slav Circle. He told me once, after the war between his country and the Serbs, that he had been under the surveillance of Father Dabor's agents. Reshad-Hamid has a tenacious memory, and he described Father Dabor as the cleverest secret service agent in the Balkans. Perhaps he fears Father Dabor and knows of Janos's connections with him as a youth, when the priest was his guardian. Possibly Hassan was commissioned to report on Janos's associates."

Janos exchanged glances with Vuco.

"In such a time as this," Vuco said slowly, "a

man like Hassan could disappear and never be missed!"

"Pooh!" said Janos. "Had I thought of it, I could have stabbed him to death last night!"

Professor Lamsdorff balanced his chair on two legs as he leaned his head back and scanned the rough rafters above him.

"The matter of removing a spy," he observed gloomily, "is a detail quite outside my own calculations. It seems to me that either of you might dispose of Hassan without violence or crime. A decoy letter or message could be devised to get him out of this vicinity while Reshad-Hamid is here."

Vuco placed both elbows on the table and leaned forward; his look was furtive as he spoke in a lowered tone.

"As secret operatives," he hinted, "we are charged with matters involving tremendous responsibilities. Sentiment must be eliminated from our calculations!"

Professor Lamsdorff raised one finger warningly.

"The unexpected disappearance of Hassan," he said in an undertone, "might deter Reshad-Hamid from coming to —"

"Gentlemen," Janos interrupted, "this wine is making me ill. I must go back to my room."

He held the bottle up to the light and frowned his disapproval.

No sign had been passed to Lamsdorff and Vuco,

yet they sensed the situation. They understood quite accurately that the subject should be dropped. Someone was approaching. I stole a glimpse of the man in the doorway. It was Ivan Romanov!

"Gentlemen," Janos said hastily, "it will be best to allow Hassan to go unharmed. I will dispel Reshad-Hamid's suspicions by departing forthwith for Dalmatia. I shall expect your aid in the Laszlo estate business. If I receive an official appointment you may rely upon my repaying your favors a hundred-fold. Adieu!" and he departed by way of the side door.

Having no wish to introduce myself in my disguise, I decided to wait outside for Romanov. As soon as he reached Lamsdorff's table, I shambled off by skirting the tables and slouching out into the street.

It was in this manner that I again saw Romanov in the capital of Bosnia, with its stucco houses and its soldiers — everywhere. The streets were blocked with artillery. The cars were vomiting forth regiments of soldiers. Patrols of horsemen paraded the streets. On and on they went and always more were coming behind. I wondered if Feodora could be safe in the midst of this uproar, noisy impudence and glittering brutality. Officers on horseback dismounted before discolored houses, churches and mosques. Interminable lines of soldiers were passing the glaring shops and taverns glittering with plate glass, through which crafty,

impudent eyes stared out upon the passers-by. Gaudy painted women from the cheap cafés, chantants of Vienna, had followed the soldiers toward the frontier. In the noisy gardens they postured and sang, shrunken and wizened like the garden plants shrivelled from the summer's radiating heat, while the men went tramping on, with knapsacks on their backs and rifles on their shoulders. The noise was beyond description as the trains discharged loaded mules, guns, horses, more horses with officers mounting them in the street. On the front pavement the dark-eyed Bosnians elbowed me to one side or ran into me constantly.

At length Lamsdorff and Vuco emerged from the White Eagle. A man who had posted himself across the street saw them come out and he struck off down the street behind them, being very careful not to attract attention. Pursuer and pursued passed out of range just as Ivan Romanov stepped out and consulted his watch, undecided as to his next mission. Then he moved off, followed, I noticed, by another man — also stationed across the street. I forced my way across the street between the artillery and gun-carriages — with soldiers sitting loosely on them, holding one another's hands.

Romanov was followed by the spy to a hotel, which Romanov entered. The spy took up a lounging position opposite the entrance. I walked by him carelessly and entered the hostelry, following Romanov up the stairway which he was ascend-

ing. At the end of a hall he unlocked his room and entered. I rapped on the door.

"What is it?" he asked in German.

"Would you like to see Jimmy Oyler, of California?" I inquired in a low voice.

The door opened and I stepped in.

Immediately Romanov pushed a long revolver against my stomach, and glaring angrily, demanded:

"Who are you?"

I told him that I had been advised to keep my business secret and that I had conceived the idea of darkening my hair and skin to avoid recognition by Janos Kyrallyi, who was planning to secure the Laszlo lands which should be mine by right, as the eldest male descendant of Baron Laszlo. I also recounted the occurrences at his ranch when I helped him into Stephen Carroll's clothes, in order that he might escape with me to the train at Dixon.

Romanov drew a long breath and whistled.

"I should never have known you," he said, shaking hands.

"I am quite sure of that!" I replied grimly, pointing to the long revolver which he was returning to his pocket.

Romanov grasped both my hands and continued:

"More than a year it has been since we drove to Dixon, eh? Well! Well! This is fine! But what brings you to the Bosnia?"

I produced the jewels which Melloni had en-

trusted to me, and gave him the facts concerning them much more in detail than they have been stated to my readers, and then asked him if he would engage in the undertaking — delivering them to Philomela at Belgrade, and if so, whether he believed he would succeed. He regarded me curiously for a moment.

First pledging me to secrecy, regardless of the outcome of our interview, Mr. Romanov told me that he had heard from his daughter at Agram, where she was visiting Madame Lamsdorff. She mentioned the arrival of Philomela shortly after the war was declared. The two had been planning to return to America by way of Italy, and were now on their way to Zara. From Zara they expected to find passage to Venice. Janos Kyralyi had also started for Zara, where he hoped to receive a high appointment as an officer of Austria on the arrival of General Deák. He then asked me whether I cared to undertake the protection of his daughter and the delivery of Philomela's jewels. I told him that his hotel was watched at this moment and that he had been followed from the White Eagle, at which he smiled grimly and tapped his revolver.

Good news sometimes follows on the heels of bad, and he was soon confessing that he had wished to see Feodora married to the young officer, Petar Vuco. The sudden declaration of war and Vuco's double dealing had caused him to change his views,

and Romanov heartily assured me of his full consent to our marriage, promising to write Feodora at once to that effect. He explained Feodora's neglecting to write to me regarding this subject by informing me that she had promised him that she would not marry me without his consent. At the same time, however, she had announced her firm resolve to remain unmarried should he withhold his consent to our union.

"I will tell you this," Romanov continued: "Owing to the espionage which you have observed, I dare not leave Sarajevo. I suspect Janos Kyrallyi of enticing Lamsdorff and me into a trap. Do not trust Janos!"

"Is he in the Austrian service?" I asked.

"Openly he poses as a loyal Dalmatian," he replied; "secretly he is in the service of the Servians. If our suspicions are verified, both Petar Vuco and Janos Kyrallyi are prepared to betray either side, as best serves their own interests. Should they betray us to Austria, Lamsdorff and I would be shot as spies. We have not as yet learned Janos's connection with the office of the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs. He goes to Dalmatia this afternoon on a financial mission to the Adriatic. He has already departed."

"Then I cannot reach Zara in advance of Janos?" I asked.

"No," replied Romanov, "that is improbable, as you will be stopped frequently along the road."

Janos goes armed with credentials that will gain him the assistance of all the authorities along the way."

"At any rate," I said, "I am anxious to be off. Let us say our adieus and I will start at once."

Romanov was writing a letter to his daughter. I watched him silently until he passed the note to me, saying:

"Do not tell Feodora that I am in danger. If I can elude my watchers and cross to Servia, I may join you in America very shortly."

I bade Ivan Romanov farewell and left the hotel, revolving in my mind his instructions and directions as to the best route to Zara.

An old Italian who had once lived in America wished to go to the Adriatic Coast, and I agreed to engage him as my servant. We set out at once and after becoming better acquainted with the old fellow, I confided to him that my hair was really red, explaining that I had used walnut-stain as an experiment. He showed me, in the days that followed, how to remove it. Soon I was looking more like myself.

The tedious journey consumed many days. I will give no account of the trip further than to say I was not interested in any part of it until my Italian announced that we were approaching Zara. I was feverishly anxious to find Feodora. It would have been a delightful experience under normal conditions to drive through the avenues of chestnuts, almonds, elms and cherry-trees; past

the miles of olives, vines and vegetables that flourish in this pebbly soil; past the berry-bushes that veiled the walls as we approached the towns; and to revel in the beauty of the wistaria, laurestinus, yellow genista, hyacinth, tulip, forget-me-not, jonquil and calceolaria. But more serious thoughts distracted me from an appreciation of the country. A week had passed since I left Sarajevo.

My old Italian snuggled down into the cushions when we reached the top of a steep incline after many loops. Below was Zara! Ahead, the road converged down — straight, smooth and empty. I bent over the wheel and the car darted down the hill past the rock-bound pastures where gayly-costumed girls watched the sheep; past fig and olive groves; past a Turkish fortification bordered by low juniper bushes.

Now the road was bordered by mulberry trees until I could distinguish the sea as we approached its dark expanse. The lights of a fairy city began to gleam in the distance; a tiny harbor, mediæval walls and Porta Terraferma — the gateway to Zara, my Italian informed me.

In the distance the pearly slopes of the mountainous islands grew more distinct. In the limpid water I could see the fishing-smacks at anchor beyond the low embankment and a black-and-red steamer approaching the pier. Soon I could discern a fisherman's boat moving leisurely along, with limp and flapping sail, two men in red caps at the oars. I turned two streets to the left, and

then to the right; and I stopped at the Hotel Bristol, Zara. My servant informed me that a large percentage of the fifty thousand inhabitants of Zara were Italian, and that Austria had never succeeded in intimidating them into abandoning their attitude of devotion to the mother country. Italy, he said, had never renounced the idea of recovering one day that part of her original territory consisting of Trentia, Istria and Dalmatia.

At the hotel I learned that five thousand refugees from Switzerland had made their way into Italy, adding to the five thousand refugees at Genoa. Zara, too, was crowded with travelers seeking passage to Venice.

My Italian servant interpreted what an Austrian officer was saying to him in Slavic:

"All foreigners must report to the Commissioner at the Suliak."

We followed the officer to another building across the square. His group of soldiers were gathered beneath the archway of a stone barrack adjoining the Suliak.

"What's the Suliak?" I wanted to know.

The old Italian addressed himself to the officer again. "The Suliak," he interpreted, "is the name of a temporary structure which has been erected by the army since war was declared by Austria. It is used as a reception-hall and quarters for refugees. The Commissioner is in charge of the quasi-prisoners. Foreigners are practically

prisoners in Zara until they are investigated by the Commissioner."

At once I thought of Feodora and Philomela — prisoners here, perhaps, or in the power of Janos Kyralyi!

The officer informed us that the Hungarian Lloyd steamer which usually brought the Paris mail did not arrive at five-thirty as usual. The Austrian was very affable and gave me a receipt, registering my automobile. He then informed me that I might have the freedom of the streets, his only requirement being that I report again before eight o'clock. It was past six and I was left to my own resources, as my Italian wished to visit his compatriots in Zara. I found my way to the narrow street that leads to a walk by the sea.

Flocks of terns, those gulls of the Adriatic, whirled and winged their way across the rippling waters. Below the quay which has replaced the ancient walls, the water was deep and the boats passed close. The men exchanged greetings with passers-by or stopped to talk at the stone pillars along the way. A gray coasting-steamer with a green water-line poked its sharp nose between the larger craft in the crowded waters and ran alongside the quay. There were fierce noises of sirens from innumerable steamers, yells from boatmen — Dalmatians, Herzegovinians, Bosnians, Croatians, Istrians, Hungarians, Germans, Italians, Turks. An Austrian personage of importance, I judged,

was about to disembark from the coaster. I addressed a bystander in French and he tried to inform me that the new commandant had arrived with a party of distinguished prisoners of war.

I mingled with the crowd and waited. Black-hulled steamers from Palermo, from Ragusa, from France and even England were anchored on the sparkling sea, while bright-hued Venetian boats loaded with queer cargoes were not permitted to depart. There were freighters and trim passenger-boats, with picturesque yards and masts, in contrast to the huge funnels of the modern steamers. There were gayly-colored cargo-boats from the islands, with orange and brown sails — spotted with odd patches, their stripes of green or red or blue around the clumsy hulls, their big, round eyes and slanting yards, their billowy sails spread to the south wind or hanging limp against the mast or spread in folds to dry.

Patrols of horsemen now paraded everywhere and from the tiny streets emerged the soldiers in pale-blue uniforms — interminable lines of soldiers. A stout man with Jewish features tapped me on the shoulder.

“American?” he inquired.

“California,” I replied tersely. “And you?”

“New York!” he vouchsafed.

“What’s new?” I inquired.

“The new commandant is escorting a delegation of Montenegrins into Zara. They are exchanging prisoners. The ginks have brought a distin-

guished Austrian to Zara and expect to exchange him for Count Ovic, a relative of the Montenegrin King. They make quite a ceremony of it."

At length, after but slight loss of time in clearing the line of march, the soldiers were aligned so that the arrivals could march between them to the Suliak. The commandant appeared at the head of his staff of Austrians. Surely I had seen him less than a fortnight since! That hawk-like nose — the blue scar across his chin! Petar Vuco! I bit my lip and refrained from an exclamation that rose to my lips. He was accompanied by gold-laced nobles and epauletted officers from Vienna.

Next came the Montenegrin delegation, headed by a gigantic priest, his figure shrouded by a robe that touched the ground, his snow-white hair showing beneath the distinctive cap of his profession. He had a flat, ugly, cruel face. His roving eyes glanced over the officers with a half-contemptuous humor that was keen, impudent, almost insolent. Yet his life of benevolence and kindness had made lines of beauty in a face that would otherwise have seemed hard and barbarous.

"Well, what do you know about that?" murmured the Jew. "The distinguished prisoner is Father Dabor, a priest of Cetinje!"

Immediately I remembered the conversation I had overheard at the White Eagle. Lamsdorff had described Father Dabor as the shrewdest diplomatic agent in the Austrian secret service — the man whom Reshad-Hamid most feared!

CHAPTER XIII

THE PATENT OF GENTILITY

The picture of this first sight of my grandfather stands vividly before my eyes. From the walk beside the Adriatic I watched him until the soldiers formed behind the delegation and he disappeared in the direction of the governor's palace. My heart swelled with hope for Feodora's safety. My grandfather was here!—Baron Laszlo, high in the secret councils of the Austrians, but known only to me as such. To the others he was Father Dabor, the humble priest.

I found myself wandering with the New Yorker from place to place, asking occasional questions. But we received nothing but stares from the soldiers and polite, uncomprehending nods from the Dalmatians, who doffed their tiny red caps and proceeded about their business.

Leaving the Jew at the Suliak entrance, I reported to the officer as directed. The procedure was brief and I was told to remain until dismissed. I must see the commissioner.

I found the Jew dozing in a chair. He had to report the same experience as my own.

"Did you see the commissioner?" I inquired.

"No," the New Yorker replied lazily. "I went to the commissioner's hall upstairs and they told me to ask for him here this evening. I drifted down the street until I grew tired of the comic opera clothes of these Zara comedians and dropped in on a wop storekeeper. We conversed in English and he told me to see the commissioner. I took a check to the bank and asked for some money but the bird in the cage said: 'See the commissioner! Ask for the commissioner at the Suliak!' They won't make any cable transfers unless you see the commissioner. Out there in the lobby they're all waiting for the commissioner."

Troops headed by a band halted in front of the building. We stationed ourselves near the window, amusing ourselves by watching the queer costumes of the people.

"Well," said the Jew, "the commissioner is the 'big noise' here, so far as foreigners are concerned. He won't be here until late, they say. Suppose we go in and dine now while our silver money is good. Later on they may demand gold!"

We entered the dining-room and were served with sea-food — dentale and branzino — of which we partook heartily. The double windows of the room were nailed down and the chinks stuffed with cotton; also the doors were kept carefully closed. Everyone was smoking and the room was thick with it. I could scarcely breathe. We finished hur-

riedly and found seats outside, where we could watch the people.

Outside, great crowds of people thronged the tiny streets, eager for war news. All Europe was said to be at war. It was reported that four hundred thousand Austrians were marching on Servia. The Kaiser had invaded Belgium — no one knew why! Germans had crossed the French frontier; England had attacked Germany on the sea; Russians were marching toward Berlin!

"What's it all about?" I asked wonderingly.

"Search me!" responded the Jew helplessly.

"Americans may become embroiled," I suggested.

"Not me," said the New Yorker promptly and incorrectly, walking over to the window to indicate his disinclination to discuss such a possibility.

Tourists were exchanging news behind me. In the Adriatic, which was of immediate interest, Montenegrin forces had been engaged for two days with a strong detachment of Austrian troops in the neighborhood of Grahavo. The Austrians had attacked the western frontier of Montenegro from Krivesije to Grahavo; at the same time Austrian vessels bombarded the Montenegrin position at Mount Lovcen. Then the garrison at Cattaro had attempted several sorties against Antivari, but all were frustrated by the Montenegrins; the Austrians had lost many men in these sorties, the tourists said.

I passed to a group of foreigners who had other

news. They spoke of a naval battle between French and Austrian warships off Budua, in the Adriatic. The French squadron, coming from the southwest, attacked the Austrian warships. Two Austrian warships — ironclads — had been sunk, one was set on fire, and a fourth fled northward toward Cattaro. Later the fortifications at Cattaro were completely destroyed and the Austrian commander was said to be parleying for terms of surrender. The bombardment, it was said, had been conducted by a fleet of the Allies.

I returned to my seat beside the Jew and he proposed a stroll. When we reached the door we were halted by soldiers and requested to remain in the Suliak until we were passed by the commissioner who would arrive shortly. It was not my first experience of this kind. We resumed our seats.

About half an hour later there was a commotion at the door and a band played. Those around the entrance moved away to make a passage for the commissioner; those scattered around the lobby left their seats to get close, and a bronzed, athletic young man in a uniform with a decoration walked briskly to the officer's desk.

"It's Kid Carroll, the pug!" exclaimed the New Yorker, gripping me by the arm. "Look! Carroll, the heavyweight prizefighter! I've seen him in the ring! He's the 'big noise' over here!"

I made no comment, for the commandant, Petar Vuco, had entered with a group of officers. He was greatly changed in the fortnight which had

elapsed since I saw him in the White Eagle — much thinner and dark circles were noticeable under his eyes. The eagle-like nose was sharper and more aggressive than when I saw him in Sarajevo.

At that moment Janos Kyralyi, the commissioner, giving some directions to the officer, happened to turn in my direction. His roving eye caught mine and there was a sparkle of surprise, then quick recognition, as he crossed swiftly to me. The whispering refugees were immediately discussing me — envying and appraising me.

"Greetings and salutations!" he said pompously. His whole manner was patronizing and self-important in the extreme.

I greeted him with no sign of ill-will.

"Times change!" he continued. "Heretofore you have always found me eating humble-pie! What brings my red-headed cousin to Dalmatia? News of Feodora's wedding to Petar Vuco?"

The question came like a blow across my face.

"You are a liar!" I flamed. "She is betrothed to —"

"Janos!" It was a woman's voice behind him.

The commissioner turned quickly.

"Yes, Gabrielle!" he responded. "Just one moment, please. I want to present a Californian. My wife, Mr. Oyler!"

Philomela! It was the same perfectly proportioned figure and the gleaming shoulders, exquisite in their perfection, were bare. The corsage was cut low in front and still lower in back, revealing

back and neck, snowy in contrast with the luminous black eyes and masses of dark tresses. A tiara of diamonds set in platinum flashed in her hair, accentuating its sable lustre. She had been standing by the window, beautifully posed and beautifully dressed in some green stuff over gold. It made her look thinner than she was, but it brought out all her sinuousness. She moved like a wave of the sea as she advanced to greet me with her most entrancing smile.

As she approached, the buzz of conversation ceased.

"Philomela!" I cried; "ivory-skinned, jetty-locked, superbly beautiful!"

"Tut, tut!" she laughed happily. "You were ever a sad flatterer! But why are you here in Zara?"

Out of the tail of my eye I saw Janos watching and listening.

"To deliver a parcel from Luigi Melloni," was my unexpected reply, as I produced the jewels and extended them to her.

"Do you know what it contains?" she asked presently.

"The Laszlo jewels!" I replied.

The answer seemed to please Janos. He smiled cynically as he crossed to the desk to confer with Petar Vuco.

Philomela then spoke rapidly, telling me that Janos had threatened to betray Feodora's father to the Austrian office unless she would immediately

marry Petar Vuco. Feodora had given her promise, in order to gain time, when she learned that Father Dabor was to be exchanged for Count Ovic. She intended to throw herself upon the protection of Father Dabor after he had been informed of the double dealings of Petar Vuco and Janos. Hassan, a Bosnian in the service of Austria, was once Janos's companion in Montenegro. They had quarrelled, and Philomela had induced him to carry word of what was contemplated to Father Dabor. The priest had arrived and would appear in the reception-hall very shortly.

There was more commotion at the door and I turned, expecting to see another official. Instead, my eyes fell on a slender young woman, a pretty, smiling, blushing divinity in an opera coat — Feodora — whose very prettiness, smile and blush had evoked an immediate murmur of appreciation from the bystanders. Feodora exchanged a glance with Philomela — for a second; but in that second Philomela flashed the message to her that she had posted me.

Feodora gave me her hand — withdrawing it quickly.

"Dear, dear Feodora — I know!" I whispered. She closed her eyes a little and sighed softly.

"Do not lose sight of me," she begged, as Vuco and Janos approached.

Philomela prevented a meeting between us by advancing and taking Vuco's arm. Janos and

Feodora followed them upstairs to the reception-hall.

An Austrian officer led me across the room as General Deák arrived with Father Dabor and the Montenegrins. The officer spoke in French, introducing himself as Hassan. He told me that General Deák had arrived from Vienna, accompanied by a number of officers. He was scattering them around with the Austrian troops from Vienna to Cattaro and arresting other officers accused of treason. He said that Vuco and Kyralyi expected appointments but that both would be replaced by trusted men from Vienna.

"General Deák will introduce their successors and deliver their patents to-night," he finished, as he moved off with the soldiers who were ascending the stairs.

By the time the soldiers had reached the floor above, my New York Jew was tugging at my arm. I motioned him to accompany me upstairs. Hassan, at the head of the stairs, permitted us to pass.

Looking easily above the heads of the soldiers, I perceived another that towered above the crowd of officers and nobles. It was the silvery poll of my grandfather. Beside him stood Feodora; and Philomela was between Janos and Petar Vuco. Presently Feodora saw me and spoke to Father Dabor — at which his eye sought mine, only to look away again immediately.

On reaching the room General Deák took his

place in the midst of a circle formed round a large table, and the proceedings began.

I should gladly have listened to the routine matters upon which both Petar Vuco, the commander, and Janos Kyralyi, the commissioner, made reports to the general. The details were scarcely over when, in accordance with the program previously arranged by General Deák, the governor entered, accompanied by his magnificently uniformed staff.

Unfortunately the hall, in spite of its vast proportions, could not contain all the soldiers who followed, and the crush was so great that it was not only crowded, but the stairway was invaded to the point where the noise drowned the voices around the table and I could not hear the governor's address.

Hence I was obliged to content myself with hearing from the rear the repeated applause bestowed on the governor as I penetrated to within a short distance of the rows of soldiers that formed a square round the officials at the table. Clad in a smartly-tailored suit which I had resumed after discarding my cheap artist's disguise, big, red-haired, I was in sharp contrast to the uniformed, rather under-sized soldiers. I was just moving over to a better position when some one seized my arm.

"Ah! Mr. Californian," the New York Jew said to me, with a smile, as he prepared to follow me, "that is capital — we will listen together."

"That will be a pleasure," I said politely, with the feeling common to wanderers that a countryman must be treated with respect, although I much preferred to give my attention to the proceedings rather than to converse with a compatriot.

We ceased talking, for General Deák had left the group of nobles and officers comprising the Montenegrin delegation and stood facing his Austrian colleagues, to discuss the purpose of his visit.

As the oldest officer in the Austrian army, he had journeyed to Zara at the request of the Minister of Finance and Chief of Administration for Bosnia and Herzegovina to support the cause of the present governor of the Province of Dalmatia. General Deák was one of the most distinguished men in the southern part of the monarchy. Hero of the Seven Weeks' War and numerous subsequent affairs, he was a national figure. An eloquent speaker and a sincere and loyal patriot, he represented the highest type of Austrian subject.

Holding in his hand a roll of parchment, he began a recital of the official changes since the outbreak of war, touching upon Montenegro's delivery of Father Dabor in exchange for their prisoner — Count Ovic. He assured them of his confidence in the governor of Dalmatia, notwithstanding the temporary incumbency of Petar Vuco as Commandant.

Arriving at the position of Vuco as command-

ant, at which point it was expected that he would make some complimentary reference to Vuco's capability and patriotism, General Deák paused. Then he held up the scroll and gazed at it with extreme interest.

"I hold here a patent, reviving the title of Baron Laszlo," the speaker said impressively. "It is proposed that he be made Commissioner of Finance, subject to the confirmation of this Assembly. Anton Laszlo's father was not a 'common noble.' The term noble used to have a significance of its own in Hungary and the provinces. Nobility and political rights coincided and hence the invariable reward of services to the state was admission to the ranks of the nobles, through which alone such rights could be enjoyed. Although his great-grandfather was a pandour, Laszlo was admitted to the ranks of the gentry as a reward for services. Having alluded to Baron Laszlo's rights, it is proper to disclose the circumstances of the official preferment of Petar Vuco, who seeks to supplant the present governor of Dalmatia.

"Coloman Tisza acquired despotic control of two hundred and fifty constituencies and a majority in the Orzaggyules without the assistance of forty Croatian delegates. These seats Count Tisza bestowed upon his followers as largess for their loyal support; and in this way many a decayed aristocrat repaired the broken fortunes of

his family — many a pliant official rose to riches and honor. This solid array of Tisza's so-called 'Mamelukes' planted its foot on the neck of the non-Magyar races. When Servia was at war with the Turks, all open expressions of sympathy with Servia were sternly repressed by these 'Mamelukes' but the Magyar enthusiasm for the Turkish cause reached fever heat. A deputation of Budapest students was sent to Constantinople to assure the Turks of Magyar solidarity when Abdul Kerim, the Turkish general, defeated the Servian army at Alexinatz and he was presented with a sword by public subscription. One of these 'Mamelukes' was a Vuco!

"In this way whole villages were ennobled, especially during the Turkish wars, and as the privilege was hereditary, there arose a class of 'common nobles' who possessed the same rights as the gentry, yet could make no pretense to gentility. Their votes turned the scale at the sexennial elections to the county assemblies, and there thus was developed the 'Cortesch' system, under which the rival candidates feasted and boarded impecunious 'noble' voters for days before the election and marshalled them in battle array when the polling day arrived. And some of these were Slovaks, among them Vuco's father — who was of pure Slovak parentage. After his childish days he learned the Magyar language, and in the position of advocate in the Zagrab district first entered the whirl-

pool of local politics, from which he emerged as a combination of demagogue and Magyar chauvinist, without sympathy or interest for the Slavs."

The speaker turned and glanced coldly at Vuco, seated at the table. The commandant was listening, astonished at this uncomplimentary divulgence of the political history of the Vucos.

Vuco's eyes, shining like little black beads, were narrowed to mere slits. They sparkled with excitement and annoyance; his scarred chin showed a purple streak in the bright light. Impatiently he turned toward Janos Kyralyi at his right, but Janos deserted his companion by moving out of range when Vuco whispered to him. Father Dabor looked amused but remained politely attentive.

"Look at Vuco!" said the New Yorker suddenly.

I caught the faint gleam of polished metal, as Vuco withdrew his hand from a vest pocket and secreted something in his cuff.

"Automatic pistol," said the Jew laconically.

"Suppose we move closer," I suggested. "I want to get behind Vuco's weapon."

We edged our way toward the table while General Deák, after having thus disposed of Petar Vuco, abruptly reverted to the career of Baron Laszlo. He had gone to England as a diplomatic agent of Austria. More than forty years had passed since he disappeared. But during that time he had done good work in the service of Aus-

tria. He recalled how Baron Laszlo had always insisted that the Italian and Slavic subjects of Austria be treated with liberality, which should assure him the support of the assemblymen in Dalmatia.

The first sign of enthusiasm followed his mention of the Italians and Slavs. There was a low murmur passing round the table, the first sign of sentiment arising from the officers and nobles of Dalmatia, whose history, culture and traditions were either Slavic or Italian.

"My countrymen," General Deák was saying, "I am the only man who knew, during the forty years which have elapsed since he disappeared, what became of the Baron Laszlo. This patent, reviving his title and appointing him commissioner here, brought me to Zara and I ask your votes in confirmation! This patent, which I have brought from Vienna, was approved, confirmed and sanctioned by his imperial and apostolic Royal Majesty, Franz Josef, Emperor of Austria-Hungary!"

"The Emperor! The Emperor!" The words went up and down the lines of officers, while the soldiers saluted as the speaker paused.

Janos's eyes, more baffling than ever, rolled restlessly, pausing to glare balefully at Philomela, who shrank back into the shadow behind Feodora. Janos suspected her of having played him false and she sensed his growing suspicion, as I did. The Jew saw Janos fingering something in his

sleeve. He gave me a meaning look, grasped my arm and forced me with him toward the table.

"Kid Carroll is gunning for somebody," muttered the New Yorker. "Get hep!"

Hassan had moved closer to Petar Vuco and I turned my gaze away, for General Deák had raised the scroll again to resume his peroration.

"Baron Anton Laszlo is not dead!" suddenly announced the speaker, his voice, although querulous with age, sounding like a trumpet. "When Von Metternich fastened his system upon Austria Laszlo joined the colony of noble exiles in Montenegro. His name and fortune went from him because of his love for the common people. To-day his country is at war — and Baron Laszlo has thrown aside the cloth to once more grasp the sword for Austria. Officers! nobles! soldiers! Salute Baron Laszlo who lives again! The Father Dabor that was — is no more! The Montenegrins thought to send an Austrian priest in exchange for one of their hostages. They sent us — not a priest — an Austrian nobleman, with the orders of a warrior! This scroll is my authority from the Emperor to revive his rank of baron, to announce his authority as commissioner in the place of Janos Kyralyi!"

The assemblymen, watching closely, saw the white-haired priest remove his red cap, tear off his long scarlet-and-white cloaking, cast them aside and face the table, standing at attention. Gen-

eral Deák saluted and the officers followed his example.

Many of the nobles had heard of the gigantic figure of Baron Laszlo from their forebears. They remembered the descriptions of his authoritative bearing, keen but not unpleasantly impudent stare and martial figure. He wore a silver-laced and gold-epauletted uniform of Austria. On his breast he wore a white enameled moline cross with a gold border on which was inscribed "Fortitudini," and beneath it appeared a green cross with a crown and a red medallion with a green mountain.

General Deák was a far-sighted politician, with a thorough understanding of the Italian and Slav temperament. He took advantage of the gaping silence to guard against the disaffection of any voters who might object to the displacement of Janos Kyralyi.

"Officers and nobles," he announced, holding aloft another scroll of parchment, "I am ordered to remove Petar Vuco from the office of commandant and to place the governor in charge of the army in Zara. It is the wish of the governor that the Montenegrin delegation be permitted to depart with Count Ovic. In exchange they have brought the Baron Laszlo."

As the speaker finished, he glanced toward the head of the stairway and nodded to an officer stationed there, and the dark, lithe lieutenant mo-

tioned very slightly to another officer at the foot of the stairs on the floor below.

Immediately the roll of drums was followed by strains of music as the band struck up the anthem "Hej Slovaci" and the white-haired Baron Laszlo, with an accompanying motion of his hand, sang the expressive words of the song in a sonorous voice, the officers joining in in response to the invitation he waved to them as he sang.

The song ended with a shower of little notes from the *fyara* and the ring of cymbals. The far-off roll of drums was lost in the martial strains of the "Rakoczy March" that sets the Hungarians ablaze. The music grew louder and louder and filled the room as the band marched into the room and stood behind my grandfather. The crowd shrieked and howled in a frenzy of patriotic fervor.

Would that I had the skill with which to present in its stirring magnificence the picture which this scene revealed to my dazzled gaze at this moment! The enthusiasm of this volatile crowd was not confined to the makeshift walls of the Suliak. The shouts were taken up and echoed down the narrow little alleys that pass for streets in Zara. "Laszlo! Laszlo!" and when they paused for breath, it was to pass the word along to another about the good priest, Father Dabor, who had laid aside the cloth he had worn for forty years to once more grasp the sword for Austria. The

word went on; past the old walls, old buildings and gardens, through the tiny streets through which no carriage ever passes; on it went past the fountains and lion gateways to the painted boats at the Porta Marina, through which the harbor of Zara is gained.

I felt a noble pride at that moment when I thought I held, as it were, at my very command the witching eyes of the lovely Feodora, at times so haughty, but now so gracious, and which seemed at every moment to gain fresh brilliancy at the sight of the surprise my grandfather had furnished her persecutors.

In this unique dénouement events occurred so rapidly that I was astonished when I found myself ignoring the two deposed traitors.

Petar Vuco was silent, but his beady eyes snapped as he tapped nervously with his fingers on the table before him. Janos's eyes did not leave Philomela, who was speaking to General Deák, who conferred with Feodora and my grandfather. Philomela was pointing me out to General Deák, whose roving eye was now fixed on me. The general gave a harsh command to the soldiers in front of me and they turned to escort me to the circle about the table. We threaded our way forward in compliance with his summons. I saw two soldiers suddenly seize Petar Vuco and disarm him. He was led away, jaw stuck out, his black eyes snapping venomously.

While this part of the procedure was interesting the crowd, Janos Kyralyi had turned to General Deák with the inquiry:

"What is my rank?"

"You are now a private citizen," replied the general.

"Very well," said Janos, bowing sarcastically when he rose; "I wish my job-chasing old humbug of a grandfather good-evening!"

"Not so fast!" said General Deák sternly; "you must return with me to Vienna!"

"Why?" asked Janos after a pause. "Am I a prisoner?"

"Yes!"

Janos started, his sunburned features distinctly paling.

"What is the charge?" he inquired.

"Treason!" replied the general succinctly.

"Twenty-five members of the Circle are prisoners at Sarajevo!"

My grandfather was embracing me but my responses to his greetings were incoherent because of my apprehension as to what might transpire while Janos retained possession of the automatic. My eyes had never left him, even as I took Feodora in my arms.

Janos turned from General Deák when he learned that he was under arrest; his other hand sought another pocket. Suddenly he turned and glared at Philomela. His look made my flesh creep.



"I die anyway!" he cried, in a frenzy of passion; "but I will kill you for your treachery!"

The sharp report of the automatic rang out in the shell of a building. The thin boards above Philomela's head were splintered by the bullet — which went high when Hassan leaped over the table and struck his arm up, sending the automatic spinning across the floor.

"Look out!" the New York Jew trumpeted, and I dragged her behind a group of soldiers to get her out of range as the Jew added: "he has another gun in the other pocket!"

Feodora screamed and ran to assist Philomela, while the officers stood rooted to their places with astonishment. My grandfather leaped to Hassan's assistance but Janos was too quick for them.

The crack of the automatic echoed through the hall again and Janos Kyralyi fell forward against the table — a suicide. The pistol fell noisily to the floor and all was confusion. General Deák gave his commands to the officer behind him and the soldiers removed the dead man, my grandfather following the dead body of my cousin.

The governor and his staff prepared to leave the hall, requesting me to accompany Philomela and Feodora to his palace. Half an hour had scarce elapsed when we reached the end of our journey. We entered a brilliantly lighted room where my grandfather was awaiting us. After thanking her for her devotion to his grandson (meaning me), my grandfather added:

"Your fiancée has told me that she escaped marrying Stephen Carroll before she escaped Petar Vuco; but I, who flatter myself I have seen something of life, say with Francois I.,

*"Souvent femme varie,
Bien fol est qui s'y fie."*

For this reason your marriage should take place tonight, and tomorrow you must start for Venice."

At these words I remembered the sad experience of Baron Laszlo, and what Guillaume Champfleury had told me of his experience with Josephine Holcroft, who was my grandmother. I knew that my grandfather was thinking of her. But his eyes no sooner met Feodora's than, yielding to their truth and loyalty, he abandoned a memory which caused him pain. And he was right, for she has ever been the most perfect woman earth ever saw. She has ever been an angel!

CHAPTER XIV

WEDDING BELLS

I have, then, reached the object of all my hopes: I have bidden an eternal farewell to single life, and from my married state I wave my hand in parting salutation to my kind and hospitable young lady friends. Henceforth, I shall devote myself to my home and my business, and enjoy the pleasantest existence man ever had on earth. How can I describe the picturesque wedding at Zara! At any rate, I will attempt to describe it.

Imagine the officers and nobles as they filed downstairs and out of the Suliak. They had been asked to attend our wedding, so they threaded their way through the paved alleys that barely separate the tall houses of stone, past a high Corinthian column topped by a griffin; past the five fountains in a row, with iron wheels above them — which lie almost at the foot of a Venetian tower near the fragments of a Roman arch; across the Piazza delle Erbe and the spot where once stood a Roman forum whose pavement still remains; close to the palace of the governor where, under the black eagles of Austria, the sentry, in

blue and bright yellow, stood at attention before his black and yellow box.

A sound of bells came from the direction of the Church of San Simeone, to which Queen Elizabeth of Hungary gave the arca of silver gilt, said to contain the remains of the saint. The officers and nobles entered San Simeone and filed to seats or stood about the pavement. Music as from a glockenspiel sounded brightly from behind the high altar, above which is raised the great, carved sarcophagus.

The faces of the nobles were expectant as they waited half an hour. Then came the murmur of voices outside and all eyes were earnestly fixed upon the door. Feodora, looking pale and anxious-minded, came in on my arm. My grandfather followed with Philomela on his arm. In a hidden place priests were droning the introit. Across the pavement the congregation saw the governor and General Deák, escorting ladies of the governor's family. My grandfather took his place beside me and Philomela stood next to Feodora. Behind stood the governor's party. All made the sign of the cross and retired, except the bridal couple. The droning voices ceased and the couple knelt. There was a moment of deep silence. Then a priest in scarlet and white mounted the steps which divide the altar from the arca to perform the sacramental office.

After the nuptial rites the carillon sounded again, and my grandfather, followed by the con-

gregation, led the way to the sarcophagus. Feodora and I filed slowly up the steps toward the altar where we had seen the great, glittering lid, with the recumbent figure of the saint, slowly rise between the bronze supporting fingers. One by one we gazed down into the dim coffin. There we saw a skull and the remains of what had once been a human being lying in the midst of votive offerings. On the fingers of one hand were many rings. Awed silence pervaded the place and presently the great lid sank down. All made the sign of the cross.

My grandfather led the way toward the doorway. The officers and nobles remained. Some were quietly sitting, some kneeling, some standing on the pavement. From a hidden place came Philomela's wonderful contralto notes, singing a wonderful hymn which I had never heard before. We passed out of the church. Philomela sang — sang on and on, untiring as the love that He had for the world, but that will not die when the world dies. And Feodora's spirit, caught up by its inspiration, was borne away to thoughts of Him who reigns on high, where the voices of angels joined in the hymn, were wafted to the Throne.

We followed on foot, walking between lines of silent soldiers in uniforms of blue and yellow to the palace of the governor. Philomela arrived later with the governor's family and many officers and their ladies.

"To table, friends!" the governor exclaimed —


"to table, and let each take the place he likes best!" And he offered Philomela his arm, while my grandfather led off with the governor's wife.

We seated ourselves round a sumptuous repast, strains of music floating through the palace, for the band had been stationed in an adjoining room. For some time I was unable to compose myself to dine, but nature has claims which cannot be neglected. I was fearfully hungry, and my appetite was sharpened by the scent of the dainty dishes. In spite of my excitement from the rapid succession of startling events since I arrived in Zara, I was soon yielding to a ravenous appetite.

I could not eat without drinking and there was wine on the table. The ladies had no objection to wine, so I followed their example. The whole of the company were in a charming humor when we reached the dessert. May I confess that the sight of these merry officers and charming dames produced the same effect on my senses as the dishes had done on my appetite, and insensibly dispelled my excitement?

We repaired to another hall where there was to be dancing and joined in the general gaiety until far into the night.

It was morning after our marriage. A sound of bells floated into the garden on the mighty walls around the palace, chiming above the yellowing vines on a tiny island across the green water.



Through the uncurtained windows appeared one of Zara's harbors, nestling under a great fortress wall above which, in a garden, some young soldiers were laughing and idly leaning under the trees. On the left I could see the outlines of the great yellow stone Porta di Terra Ferma, with its winged lion of St. Mark. Beyond, over the narrow exit from the harbor, I saw the land-locked Canale di Zara. And still further away I saw a Venetian fort on the peak of Ugljan, a grim shadow in the brilliant sunlight. We were to leave to-day; past the soldiers of the fortress and the winged lion; past the brightly-painted vessels I had seen so closely packed together on the blue-green water; through the narrow exit from the harbor; past the Venetian fort!

I descended to the garden where Philomela and Feodora sat at a little table. Philomela was pretending to read the Italian newspaper *Messaggero*, but getting but little sense from the printed lines. Her mind was busy with thoughts of Rutledge and our plans to leave Dalmatia before the Allies attacked Zara.

The Allies, she gathered from the paper, had landed their forces in Dalmatia after bombarding the fortified harbor of Lissa. The British and French flags had been raised over the semaphore station to provoke the Austrian fleet to come out and engage the allied fleet in battle. Three Austrian squadrons were sheltered in a canal at Fas-

sana, opposite the Austrian naval station of Pola. I gazed over her shoulder and read these headlines.

"What news?" asked Feodora. "I do not read Italian well, madame."

"Don't," Philomela pleaded, ignoring the question. "You will always be Feodora to me; and I wish to be Gabrielle — not madame — to you."

"Then it shall be — Gabrielle," returned Feodora.

"That is better," I contributed, taking up the paper.

"Dear, dear Feodora," Gabrielle murmured, "I am free at last from the monster whose name I took. Each week I have received a letter from Mr. Rutledge ever since I met him when you announced your engagement to us. I shall be your neighbor on the adjoining ranch in California as Mrs. Rutledge! I have cabled Mr. Rutledge that I am free — and you shall always be my baby sister. You are happy, dear?"

Then Feodora kissed her and I thought the circumstance of her betrothal to Rutledge justified my kissing her too.

Feodora gazed thoughtfully toward the quiet inlets of the sea, below the great walls of the ancient fortifications.

"I am afraid something may prevent our escape from here," she said. "Is there no news?" she repeated the query.

"The British and French fleets are in the Adri-

atic," I read. "The Austrian squadron is off Pola — north of here."

"How soon may we expect to depart for Venice?" Philomela wanted to know.

"Immediately," I declared, pitching down the paper and indicating the approach of the servants.

They carried our handbags. My grandfather accompanied them followed by a dark, lithe form that was familiar to me.

"My children," said Baron Laszlo, "Gabrielle has asked me to present her wedding-gifts to you. They came originally from me, and that is why she wished them to come to you from me."

I recognized the parcel which Melloni had redeemed from the money-lenders in the Jews' street at Vienna. The twenty wonderful opals, watch and cigarette-case were for me, and the diamonds, emeralds, sapphires, and the necklace of oriental pearls were for Feodora! The Laszlo jewels were to be ours! What a magnificent gift from lovely Gabrielle! Shall I confess to you, reader? And why not? Tears sprang to my eyes, and my emotion being extreme at this moment, I could only clasp her hand in silence.

"There is one," my grandfather continued, turning to the dark officer behind him, "who may well be thanked by us all. Had it not been for Hassan here, I should not have journeyed to Zara. Gabrielle did not believe that Vuco and Janos would keep their promise to protect Feodora's

father when Feodora consented to marry Vuco to save him. It was at this time that Gabrielle accosted one of the officers, who offered to undertake to rescue them and see them off by boat. But Feodora would not consent to this, fearing for the safety of her father.

"Hassan, who had lived near Gabrielle's home as a youth, was loyal to his compatriot. He sent a message across the mountains to Romanov, urging him to communicate with me. Then Romanov planned to outwit Vuco and Janos, whom he assured me were traitors to both the warring sides. Then I communicated with General Deák, a lifelong friend of my youth, whom I have often informed of secret plots against the monarchy when such information came to me. Hassan has also served the Turks, and he suspected that I had some influence in Austria; hence he sent Romanov to me. General Deák, at my request, has rewarded him for his services to us; Hassan is now Lieutenant of the Guard. I have brought him with me to bid you farewell," he finished.

From behind him the dark, lithe figure in a blue and gold uniform advanced and one by one, silently, we shook hands with Abdul Hassan, our savior.

Feodora detained him as she dropped his hand.

"I have seen you before, Lieutenant — where?" she puzzled.

"On your father's ranch, madame," said Hassan. "I passed as a Hindoo, but I was born in

the sandjak of Novi-Bazar. When your former neighbor was stabbed I left California immediately."

Vaguely I recalled that the lean, saturnine rancher on the place adjoining Romanov's had been reported killed by one of his employes after he sold the place to Philomela.

Feodora started — and in a flash she knew.

"That is why you left California?" she inquired, surprised.

"Perhaps!"

"What — what had he done to you?" Feodora pursued.

"To me? Nothing," Hassan said. "When Mr. Romanov escaped from the ranch in his visitor's clothes, I was concealed in the cinnamon vines, watching. Your neighbor had also crept over to another trellis when he heard the shot. The affair was hushed up and your neighbor sold his place. Later I saw him approach the house, and listening, I heard him threaten to expose the trick. Thinking that you might wish to summon help, I again concealed myself behind the cinnamon vines to be at hand. Then I heard what he said to you. Your manner at first led me to believe that I had made a mistake in spying, until I saw you weeping. As soon as he turned his back to you, I saw the change in your expression and knew what to do. The squash of his heavy shoes in the sticky mud prevented his hearing me behind him as he proceeded to unlock the house which

he had sold. He entered, leaving the door ajar. I followed and did what I had come to do. Then I went to Sacramento, drew my savings from the bank, boarded a train for New York and shipped to Europe. That is the whole story, madame."

"I would rather have paid him double what money he demanded," said Feodora gently.

"Even so, he would have exposed Mr. Romanov," replied Hassan.

"I never knew of your loyalty," my wife murmured.

"I would give my life to serve madame," replied Abdul Hassan, the faithful, bowing and retiring toward the palace.

My grandfather took Feodora in his arms and held her for a moment; then he turned to Gabrielle and tears dimmed his eyes as he kissed her forehead.

But why should I burden these loose pages with matters outside the limits of my theme? This is not a dramatic novel. My idea was to depict my adventures and emotions from childhood to the present time, and to do it by creating for my readers the characters who were responsible for the development of my own character by their action and reaction upon each other, and to describe the strife and collision of interests between these characters without over-demonstrative enthusiasm for the lovability of some fine spirits and without inclination to portray a human welter of contemptible individuals.

Here I will close the parenthesis I began with reference to my purpose in writing these memoirs and explaining my ineptitude — for a portrayal of the wholly contemptible neighbor who sought to blackmail Romanov's daughter, to discuss Hassan, who killed him so lightly, to dwell on Petar Vuco who was punished for his treason, or to comment on Janos Kyralyi either as a brigand, a convict, a bigamist, a murderer, a suicide. They shall have no place in the pages that follow. I will not repeat the explanations we made to my grandfather, informing him of our experiences in which these men figured. But I will now pass on to the details of our departure from Europe.


Baron Laszlo again embraced Philomela and Feodora. Then he shook hands with me and bade me farewell, urging us to accompany the sea-faring man (who had just arrived) without further delay. We watched his gigantic figure framed in the doorway for a moment to wave a last farewell; he then disappeared into the palace. Our man and I dropped into chairs and strapped the leather bags securely, lighted cigars, and then we accompanied the sea-faring man in his little red cap. We followed the direction of his arm as he waved his red cap to indicate his ship at the Porta Marina, with its carved gray lion companioned by two white stone cherubs.

Captain Gronbech waved his red cap again when we left the narrow streets — innocent of railroads, motor-cars and carriage traffic — and leav-

ing the Piazza delle Erbe by a passage between the big houses, a short walk of a few steps brought us to the sea, where two men in red caps greeted Captain Gronbech in the Slavic dialect as they passed our leather bags into two row-boats. We took places in the boats as directed and were soon gliding out to the ship.

All was ready for sailing and the ship moved out upon the glass-like water. From afar came the sound of the palace bells, calling across the gardens of this sea-girt city. In the windows of the big solid houses that faced the sea, and along the broad walk, edged by a strip of pavement that separates the cheerful palaces from the sea, the people of Zara waved their hands to the departing ship. Girls in brilliant dresses of blue and scarlet and crimson, glittering with silver coins and ornaments, and men in embroidered jackets with silver buttons, and red sashes stuck full of weapons, gaiters and pointed shoes, and little red caps went up and down along the walk, pausing to wave a farewell to our ship.

With an Italian pilot aboard, Captain Gronbech steered his ship past the brightly painted vessels — closely packed together — inside the Porta Marina. Outside the harbor the prow of the vessel veered to the left or to the right as the ship emerged into open water, only to travel again through the long and narrow channels and inlets that were like a series of lakes between the chains of islands that guard the coast of Dalmatia.



Were I to describe all my traveling incidents, I should have a great deal to narrate before I reached Venice; but I will adhere to my expressed intention of only alluding to events connected with my adventures and emotions.

The white town of Zara and the long spur of green land faded from view and the islands closed in upon us again. We faced the dreary gray of the Velebit Mountains. The white and yellow sails were left behind. The sea, protected on the left by lines of islands, was waveless. The hills along the naked coast were topped by overweening mountains of a harsh and forbidding grisliness until we reached Pola. Soon Pola was left behind and after many hours Trieste and the shores, grass-grown and a tangle of thistles, faded behind us. Captain Gronbech steered the vessel toward Venice through a little used channel of the gulf. The passage was through mine-strewn waters where there were no buoys to guide him.

The ladies had retired to their cabins and as I leaned over the rail, Feodora gripped my arm and I saw tears in her eyes as she gazed toward the east.

"What is it, dear?" I asked, throwing away my cigarette and taking her hand. Under the heavy waves of her golden hair her startling blue eyes seemed more exotic than ever. I felt a strange grip at my side at the sight of her distress.

"My father," she said tremulously. "Baron Laszlo gave me this note,—” she held an envelope in her fingers, “— and asked me to refrain from opening it until now.”

As we faced each other we started slightly, for at the same moment we thought of Romanov's peril and the espionage of which I had spoken.

"Read it," she whispered, terrified. There was something indescribably pathetic about her. I did not fail to notice that she regarded me with an unusually fixed stare. Her eyes were wide with agitation as I read aloud:

"My dear children:

"When you read this note you will be out of danger from the idiosyncrasies of the officers and nobles of my mercurial countrymen. Even as you are now departing, there are murmurings from the younger men who are unstable as quicksilver. That is why I have urged you to be off — while I have the power to urge. Even General Deák does not know what I have learned: that Austrian officers of the old school are being displaced by younger men — Germans.

"Ask for a letter from me by next boat when you reach Venice. I may find it necessary to accept your invitation to spend my declining years in the peace of your wonderful country. Already I have disposed of your automobile which you so generously presented to me, and with the money realized in the sale of it, I shall probably buy passage to the calm and peace of California. I prefer to do this rather than be dependent upon the 'Wer ists?' of Austrian officialdom.

"You are now better fortified against the shock of what I did not wish to tell you during the moments of anxiety that preceded your departure from Zara. Ivan Romanov and Ladislav Lamsdorff were arrested — charged with espionage — and shot as spies at Sarajevo. Tell Gabrielle that Luigi Melloni and his wife managed to get her aunt — Madame Lamsdorff — out of the country.

"Romanov and Lamsdorff, as well as other Russian emissaries, were in communication with Reshad-Hamid. His schemes were not in harmony with the plans of other influential Turks in Scutari — the center of intrigue and corruption — where everybody is more or less in the hands of either Austria or Germany. Reshad-Hamid discovered that the feeling is Teutonic at Constantinople. Turkish officials fear the Slav aspirations of Russia; this knowledge influenced him to betray the Russian emissaries.

"If you decide to wait in Venice for my letter by next boat, I will let you know whether I have concluded to join you in America, where I can express the sympathy I feel in person.

"ANTON LASZLO."

Feodora clasped my arm while I folded the note. There was nothing I could say to console her. Ivan Romanov was dead. Then my eyes grew moist at the sight of her dry-eyed grief and we returned to shed our tears in the privacy of our state-room, Feodora clinging closer to me every second. I closed the door and took my sweet wife in my arms to comfort her. When my face was near hers she turned her head back just a little,

offering her lips. It was a sweet, girlish kiss. She clung closer still for a moment; then she looked up at me and said through her tears:

“You are my all — now!”

I tried to assure her of my unalterable devotion. There were tears, kisses, sighs, quivering embraces, passionate whisperings, until the ship tied up in Venice.

We were, indeed, famously recompensed for our delay in Venice; for Philomela urged us to visit the wonderful Venetian Academy with its paintings by Bellini, Titian, Veronese and Tintoretto. The visit was made by gondola, after which we went to the beautiful church of Santa Maria della Salute to view the fine Titians in the art gallery in the sacristy. We found time to spend half an hour gliding in gondolas to the Armenian monastery on the Island of San Lazzare, where one of the brothers showed us many rare manuscripts and English pamphlets translated from the Armenian manuscripts, some of them of the sixth century. We were shown interesting souvenirs and autographs of famous men who had visited the monastery, among them Lord Byron, who stopped at the monastery prior to his departure to aid the Greeks in their struggle for independence. Then we returned over the placid lagoons past San Giorgio to Venice.

And so we whiled away the time until the letter from my grandfather reached us. He wrote that Austrian officials were being replaced by younger

men — mostly Germans. He said that he did not wish to remain in Austria-Hungary, since his country no longer needed his sword. He had been summoned to Vienna and intended to follow us to America from there, that he might spend his old days with his only kin. It was his acceptance of the invitation which we had begged him to consider. He asked me to inquire for a cablegram from him when we arrived in New York.

We met with many dangers and events as terrible as they are interesting to relate. But these moving episodes, which affect all alike, have been already described by far more skillful pens than mine, hence my description would offer no novelty; I will content myself, therefore, with giving a summary of our return to America.

We found the railway journey to Genoa an unending delight. There were frequent tunnels but the view from the high elevations to which the train wound and twisted was a compensating pleasure. The railway station at Genoa was a modern structure but a cab-drive brought us to the Italy of my dreams; the streets lined with tall buildings — marble palaces, with marble staircases flanked by statues — the stairways leading to the palm gardens above; the narrow streets with no pavements — so narrow that pedestrians often flattened themselves against the walls to let our conveyance pass another; the café where a band played and the Genoese families spent the evenings listening to the music.

When our steamer was ready to sail the hotel sent us in its omnibus to the steamship landing. It was a handsome boat, white with a red band about a black funnel and a white star on the red. Many portholes and a roomy deck indicated its concession to the passenger service.

At six o'clock one evening we started on our way to meet the *New Amsterdam*, which was one of a number of passenger steamers placed at the disposal of the United States for the carrying of stranded Americans to New York.

For assisting Americans in need, the United States cruiser *Tennessee* landed half a million dollars in gold in Europe. Thus I was able to convert my paper into gold coin.

Time after time the ship was stopped by war vessels, although it was considered neutral on the Atlantic. Finally we reached New York.

One evening nineteen hundred men, women and children — so glad to see the shores of Manhattan Island that they wept, cheered and kissed each other — arrived on the *New Amsterdam* at quarantine. All of them were ready to take oath never again to leave the shelter of the Stars and Stripes. Nearly a hundred of the seven hundred steerage passengers were men of wealth who gladly traveled in the steerage rather than remain in Europe. But we escaped the steerage.

The harbor was alive with vessels when we disembarked. Ferries pushed from every slip; freighters rode at anchor; a huge liner was bound

outward when we left our great ocean greyhound for the Hotel Imperial.

On the following morning I made my way down Liberty Street to the Chamber of Commerce. Here I found a former Californian who acted as my sponsor and my checks were quickly cashed.

At the cable office I found a message from Baron Laszlo. He would arrive within a week. I left our address with the agent for the steamship company upon whose vessel my grandfather had taken passage. We waited in New York until the Baron joined us to make the journey across America to our California home.

CHAPTER XV

THE ENSEMBLE

I can, in ending this narrative, repeat what I said at the beginning of my last chapter: "I have reached the object of all my hopes." I hope for a long time (always if it pleases God) to enjoy the gentle and peaceful existence which I have already begun.

It must not be believed that, for that purpose, I disown the friends to whom I owe so much pleasure. The thought is far from me. I am more than ever proud of having cultivated them, as it is to them alone I owe the happiness of devoting myself to the woman of my choice, and enjoying the pleasures of my chosen work and play—the mining business and golf.

My patent of gentility is displayed (I must remind my readers that I offered them my narrative with such a promise); but I must continue my recital, for I have still some events, great and small, to relate. And I have in mind Feodora's announcement of our betrothal and the party which marked the beginning of Rutledge's affair with Philomela; hence I do not take leave

of my readers yet, for in the pages that follow I shall describe an ensemble at Romanov Ranch from particulars which were furnished by Rutledge. My story begins at the ranch.

Francois Tournon's lease of the Romanov place had expired. The large two-storied dwelling of more than twenty rooms was therefore unoccupied during the interval between the date of the expiration of the lease and the arrival of Feodora. Dick Dugdale had been busily superintending the preparations for our arrival, assisted by Charlotte, his wife.

Japanese firs in squat little tubs brightened the shadows of the porch which ran around the four sides of the snow-white building behind the wistaria which grew to the entablature above. Garlands of smilax grew round the columns to adorn the ornamented frieze with its crisp and shiny leaves. Great clusters of Woodwardia leaves were flattened like monster fans against the panels between the windows. Dainty ferns swayed in baskets hung to the rafters of the wide porch. Huckleberry greens were massed in Indian baskets about the rooms.

Dick and Charlotte had sent out many invitations, inviting the family friends to be present on the day when Philomela was to motor out to the ranch with Baron Laszlo, my grandfather.

Rodney Rutledge, of the Rutledge & Oyster Company of San Francisco, thought he would be unable to go to Romanov Ranch until he was in-

formed that Philomela would be there. Then Rodney Rutledge changed his mind.

"It may be," thought Rutledge, "that I might induce her to change *her* mind!"

For many weeks, since I brought Philomela to San Francisco with us, Rutledge had been striving to induce Philomela to change her mind about a certain very important matter.

Feodora and I were very happy. Rutledge wondered if this happiness might not suggestionize the beautiful Philomela. He hastened to join her at the Romanov Ranch.

There he found Dick and Charlotte and learned that Philomela was to drive the Huckstep machine to the ranch from Sacramento; also she was to act as chauffeur for the Baron Laszlo, Dick told him, which roused new apprehensions in the breast of the enamoured Rutledge. He had heard that these Austrian noblemen were very attractive gentlemen. He decided to question Luigi Melloni — the new leader of the orchestra at the neighboring opera house — concerning this nobleman; perhaps Luigi Melloni could tell him whether the Baron Laszlo was a possible rival for the hand of the fair Philomela.

Rutledge was elated to find his memory equal to identifying Charlotte again after the long time which had elapsed since his box-party, when he first met Philomela. Charlotte was speaking to her husband:

"Bring your double's partner around to the

porch when you have him brushed and dusted. There is already quite a crowd there waiting for the Oylers and the baron."

Rutledge dismissed Dick as soon as he was shown to the dressing-rooms. Rutledge was inclined to take plenty of time, smoke a cigar, or look out into the gardens from the window until Philomela arrived — rather than converse with a group of strangers whom he could now hear chattering like so many magpies on the porch outside. But Rutledge had resolved to conduct himself with the strictest decorum; therefore he reluctantly presented himself on the porch and stared about him.

He was not to be a stranger, at any rate. Luigi Melloni, in a long-tailed coat and striped trousers, was toying with a shiny black cane that matched his silk hat, as he conversed with the Dugdales. A white-mustached man who had stood with his hands in his coat pockets removed his cap to accompany Charlotte. Rutledge decided that he was a golfer. She introduced the old gentleman as her uncle, and when Rutledge heard the name he was inclined to believe that he was a Scotchman.

"I want to introduce my uncle by marriage," remarked the charming Mrs. Dugdale. "This is Mr. Mackey, Mr. Rutledge."

Having thus introduced him, she waved her uncle aside — and began presenting Rutledge to other guests who had assembled on the porch.

The proceedings were arrested by the clatter of horses' hoofs on the driveway.

Rutledge was permitted to step back and become a part of the picture that met the alert glances of an elegantly attired, wiry man in a white waistcoat and glasses attached to a black cord, who chewed the end of a big, black cigar and assisted a lively, bespectacled and very attractive lady to alight. She removed the spectacles and produced a lorgnette.

"You may take the horses down to the barn, Martin Van Buren Price!" ordered the black-gowned lady imperiously.

"Yas'm," answered the black factotum, gathering up the reins.

Rutledge could hear the lively dialogue that followed when the masterful lady greeted the sedate dowager with a folded paper in her hands who had been introduced to Rutledge as Madame Lamsdorff.

"I suppose I'll have to forgive you, Madame Lamsdorff," blurted the imperious lady after she had hopped nimbly to the porch; "but I haven't forgotten your passing through Sacramento without looking me up!" They shook hands.

The staid lady offered the folded paper.

"I thought you still lived in San Diego," she said sharply. "Don't you know that I received this note in Berkeley only yesterday?" she demanded, as the black-gowned lady put on her glasses to read the letter.

The lady was finishing the letter:

"Your brother Luigi has probably told you of my marriage to Feodora Romanov, your foster-daughter, and I want you to meet Aunt Eleanor, my foster-mother, whom you have met as Mrs. Huckstep," read Mrs. Meriwether Huckstep.

"Foster-mother!" exclaimed Luigi Melloni's beautiful young wife, folding her skirt aside and preparing to descend to the garden; "you're young enough to be his foster-sister — with his gray hair since he returned from Europe!"

As Feodora's foster-mother, Rutledge knew the dowager for Madame Lamsdorff and the black-gowned imperious lady for Aunt Eleanor.

"You are Mr. Oyler's aunt, after all," Madame Lamsdorff declared. "My brother Luigi has told me that his mother was your half-sister. It's too bad that he did not receive a college education," she added. "My husband arranged one for him, but he evaded it."

Rutledge moved further away when he heard this discussion of college education, when he heard Mrs. Huckstep add:

"And Dick Dugdale ran away from it, too! He would have been far better off had he finished at the school instead of going in for golf as he did."

Mackey's denial of this assertion prevented the ladies from resuming the discussion and Madame Melloni returned to the group. Mr. Mackey beamed on her and trebled in his funny voice:

"I have heard that Madame Melloni is a famous soprano. Won't you sing for us — while we are waiting?"

The gracious lady smiled.

"Please don't ask me to," she demurred. "I've promised to refrain from singing until Baron Laszlo arrives — so that I may be in good voice. It will be like singing to my nearest people," she went on. "Just think of it! Luigi is my husband; Madame Lamsdorff is my sister-in-law and Philomela is our niece. Mr. Oyler lived with Luigi for four years, and now he is married to Feodora. That's five people, isn't it? I say it's quite a representation."

Rutledge wondered if anyone would claim him, as old man Mackey brightened and said:

"I'm renewing my youth with my nephew, Dick Dugdale, and Charlotte — and their son, Mackey Dugdale. I am part of their representation at this gathering. That makes four, anyway."

Aunt Eleanor regarded him through her lorgnette.

"Representation!" exploded Mrs. Huckstep. "How about my claims?" She lowered the lorgnette. "I gave both red-haired boys their early training, even if they did run away from me!"

The wiry man in the white waistcoat, who had been chatting with Melloni, returned to the group and approached Mrs. Huckstep,— Meriwether

Huckstep, Rutledge assumed. He smiled quizzically, remarking:

"Aunt Eleanor seems to be enjoying herself!"

Old man Mackey, who had been edging away from Mrs. Huckstep, again made himself audible in his high piping voice.

"You're looking well, Mr. Huckstep," he squeaked. "Don't forget that my golf lessons taught you how to stay thin. You're a nice-looking boy, Meriwether!"

This provoked an outburst of laughter from the whole company with the exception of Rutledge, who did not understand what it was all about. These people, he saw, were well-acquainted; not only were they acquainted but he had heard the ladies and Mackey explain how they were more or less related to each other.

Mrs. Huckstep wheeled on the mild-mannered Rutledge with an inquiry about business.

"I haven't made a cent since Oyler went to Europe," he was saying lugubriously.

The elegantly-attired man whom Rutledge had checked off his list as her husband drifted into the group.

"That's too bad," Mr. Huckstep said; "it is undoubtedly the fault of the times. Conditions are not right! The war in Europe —"

"Before you go any further," interrupted his wife, "I want to serve notice that war talk is prohibited at this party."

Charlotte appeared with a tray of flowers and each man was presented with a boutonniere.

"Mr. Oyler's note to us was such a pleasure," she was saying, "I have felt so anxious to see all these people together."

They discussed this subject with the result that many of the guests were discovered to have brought their invitations with them. Rutledge was thinking of Philomela. He pricked up his ears, however, as, with one hand raised as if to sustain his peroration, Meriwether Huckstep drew out his invitation and read:

"Dear Unk:

"Be a Spun-nort and take a vacation at Romanov Ranch!

"I want you to meet Luigi Melloni — the famous musician, Madame Melloni — prima donna assoluta, Philomela — the contralto nightingale, Madame Lamsdorff — European femme savant, Tippoo — retired New York theatrical star, Mrs. Charlotte Dugdale — champion golfer, Professor Mackey — direct from the links of Scotland, two honeymooners — refugees from Austria-Hungary, Rutledge — a prospective bridegroom, and a real Baron — from the land of the Black Mountain. They have been summoned to a better acquaintance with you — the financial wizard of the Sacramento Valley, and Aunt Eleanor — leader of California's all-star aggregation of social queens.

"Please run down to the ranch by two o'clock, Thursday.

"JIMMY OYLER."

Rutledge shrank back against the wistaria to escape from this unexpected prominence as a prospective benedict. And Philomela had not yet given him her promise!

"All my life," the financier was saying good-humoredly, "I have hoped that I might be permitted to enjoy intimate friendships with talented and distinguished people; now it seems that I shall have my wish gratified; that I shall also be among the first to congratulate the lovelorn swain!"

Rutledge had been slowly edging his way around the side of the house in the hope of becoming less conspicuous when a machine which had entered the driveway with long, raucous honks stopped at the doorway. Luigi Melloni, accompanied by old man Mackey, left the group to stare; but they did not gaze long, for the door of the car was suddenly flung back and the man at the wheel raised his hat, displaying a gray-streaked but shining mass of red hair, and a slight, graceful young woman with eyes the color of corn-flowers alighted from the machine.

"Feodora!" screamed Mrs. Huckstep, while the sedate Madame Lamsdorff wept happily.

"Well!" Feodora cried, "this is what I call a very happy reunion! Jimmy! Get out and accompany me to the house. Attend to the machine after while!"

They advanced and the group from the porch

immediately surrounded the pair. Rutledge sighed and thought of Philomela — the loveliest woman he had ever known. He delayed his retirement from the porch to watch the merry scene.

Dick Dugdale turned on old man Mackey and shouted:

"Look at them! You are responsible for having brought this happy couple together in Los Angeles!"

"Me responsible?" piped Mackey — very earnestly — in his querulous mode of speaking. "She refused him then! Meriwether Huckstep brought them together by sending Jimmy to his ranch as Romanov's neighbor."

"Don't argue with me! You are responsible! You recommended me as an instructor for the golf-club in Los Angeles," he insisted.

Feodora glared at the gigantic Doctor Dugdale and took the old man by the arm.

"Don't be afraid of this terrible saw-bones man! I will defend my good old teacher!" she lisped sweetly. "Didn't I fall in love with Jimmy when I ran to him — away from the automobile — while Mr. Huckstep and Aunt Eleanor were spooning in Berkeley?"

"Feodora! You are incorrigible!" gasped Mrs. Huckstep.

Meriwether Huckstep laughed from a comfortable seat beside Madame Melloni who was ensconced in his chair's mate.

Rutledge watched the machine backing away from the porch.

"I am parched for a drink," said Feodora, glancing down the length of the porch. She turned to Mackey.

"Mr. Mackey," she said, "please come and serve at the punch-bowl." Several of the others rose to accompany them.

Rutledge gaped at these contrastingly beautiful women. Feodora and Charlotte were lovely; Madame Melloni was their match in youth and beauty; who had not noticed the gracious Madame Lamsdorff; and as for Mrs. Huckstep's patrician presence — no one could describe that! Rutledge's thoughts turned to the gorgeous creature he had first seen as Philomela, the Zagrab houri, and he found her radiance uneclipsed in comparison of these enchanting ladies.

"I remember my first visit to this ranch," Mrs. Huckstep was saying.

"And so do I!" Feodora interrupted. "If you hadn't called that day I might not now be Mrs. James Oyler! Perhaps I would still retain my girlish smile!" she added, teasing.

"No sarcasm!" remarked Meriwether Huckstep with a yawn. "Your husband is a money-getter — and president of the Sierra Madre Gold Mining Company, which owns a very valuable property at present. What I'd like to know is why the baron is not here yet."

Charlotte smiled eagerly, opened her bag and produced a telegram which she extended to him.

"This message," Mr. Huckstep announced, "comes from Sacramento." He glanced at it and then his face brightened.

Doctor Dugdale rescued the telegram from the porch when it slipped from Huckstep's fingers.

Luigi Melloni approached with Madame Lamsdorff on his arm.

"Tell us what delays my niece!" he begged. Dick Dugdale read:

"Missed the first train. Waiting for the golf paraphernalia. Will see you shortly.

"PHILOMELA."

Mrs. Huckstep took the telegram from Dick and verified the doctor's reading with considerable wonderment.

"All the way to Romanov Rancho — for golf!" she puzzled.

Her remark provoked an outburst of mirth from Feodora.

"Golf?" fluted old man Mackey. "Are those putting-greens?" he inquired, peering out through the wistaria.

"It was my suggestion," said Charlotte. "When the lease expired I suggested to Feodora that she have mowers run over the pastures along enough ground to lay off nine holes of golf. We sent for a tank of hot oil for the oil-greens and

presto! — we had the links, and I'm going to win this afternoon's tournament!"

"Yes!" said Mrs. Huckstep frigidly. "I suppose you have been practicing over the course in order to have me at a disadvantage!"

Doctor Dugdale met Mrs. Huckstep's demand to know why he had not offered to play with Feodora in the tournament with his quizzical smile.

"I have not had an opportunity to speak to her," he said. He crossed to Feodora and took her hand.

"Will you play with your ex-instructor?" he said. "We have not met on the links since I left Los Angeles."

"That will be so nice, Dick," she said, as he stroked his beard. "Can you play behind the Dundrearys?"

Rutledge watched them leave the others, chatting joyously. Mrs. Huckstep fell back in her chair, which was so high that her feet dangled. This caused the foreigner, Luigi, to approach timidly and proffer a hassock, at which the invincible lady eyed him with frank distrust.

"Thank you!" she said testily.

Luigi Melloni departed, to be halted by his sister.

"What I'd like to learn," cried Madame Lamsdorff, "is when Gabrielle is coming. I haven't seen her since we left Agram."

The mention of Agram precipitated a wild fu-

sillade of questions and replies. It was there that Feodora and Gabrielle left the Lamsdorffs to proceed to Zara. At Agram her husband had been the head of the academy, Madame Lamsdorff was explaining.

"We lived in Russia when he heard of the elaborate buildings in which were installed the Franz Josef University, the chemical laboratory, natural science museum, Agricultural Society, and the South Slavonian Academy of Science, besides good preparatory schools — the instruction being in all cases in Croatian. He knew, too, that although politically Croatia is at present a province of Hungary, the two peoples hate each other as only neighbors of alien races can. And they dragged poor Ladislav into their political schemes until — he was shot — for — treason!"

"Poor, dear Ladislav," consoled Madame Meloni.

"See here, sister; we must not spoil this party!" admonished Luigi.

"If madame will walk through the garden with me —" began Mrs. Huckstep.

"If you'll all step down to the punch-bowl, I'll do the honors and —" wheezed old man Mackey.

Before they could finish their sentences, I hopped to the porch from which Rodney Rutledge was stealthily withdrawing and urging him back.

"It seems to me," I said, leading Rutledge — nervous and embarrassed — to the center of the group, which immediately ceased jabbering, "that

it is about time I was introducing you to my partner, Rodney Rutledge. Ever so many years ago I was an adding-machine salesman and Rutledge warned me of some trickery. Did any of you ever attempt to sell a specialty? No? That's what I thought! Very well, then! I'm the only malefactor present. As I was saying, Rutledge was a good fellow and he warned me of a proposed trick at the prison, where he was the clerk at that time. Rutledge can remember how the tampering was done. The loss of that sale disgusted me with the adding-machine business."

"Can he play golf?" Meriwether Huckstep cut in. "That's what interests us now!"

"If you'll allow me to caddy for you—" began Rutledge, whose fat fingers clutched a handkerchief. With it he mopped his bald head. His red face and shiny forehead indicated the perturbation he was obviously striving to conceal.

"No caddies allowed on this course!" Charlotte chirruped. "The players will carry their own clubs. You'll have to learn to play!"

"Pooh—pooh!" Luigi Melloni sniffed. "I believe he is an old hand at the game. All fat men play golf!"

Rutledge resolved to submit meekly and try his hand at the game of golf.

"Very well!" he said. "I will take a golf club in my hands and swing with all my might at the little ball. If it is untouched by my stroke, I will swing at it again and again until—bing!"

he closed his eyes, grinned, and tossed a kiss in the direction of an imaginary ball soaring upward, snapping his fat fingers and concluded — "the mighty stroke will cause it to rise so high, the ball will be as small as a little pill in the sky!"

Luigi's derisive laugh expressed his skepticism.

"For an amateur, you know a great deal about the game," he declared.

"We should suspend judgment until after the game," Madame Melloni suggested sweetly.

"My game doesn't require expert judgment," affirmed Mrs. Huckstep, for the first time relaxing her invincible manner.

"What is this fat man's handicap?" demanded Rodney Rutledge truculently. "I want to beat him! For the others — I do not care!"

"I must have more handicap than this other fat man!" said the band-master fiercely — mimicking Rutledge.

"My, my; the baby elephants are going to fight!" mocked Feodora. "I wish I had one of them for a partner; I'd win a trophy. Philomela is bringing some prizes for the winners," she added. "I'm jealous of Charlotte. She has a chest full of loving cups with handles like Jimmy Oyler's ears. I haven't a single trophy."

"You have Jimmy's ears," remarked Dick epigrammatically.

Rutledge slipped out of the limelight while the aimless chatter drifted along as before.



Doctor Dugdale was now at the piano and Meriwether Huckstep had produced his banjo, from which he was bangety-bank-a-banging rag-time to the thumping of the piano. From the music-room Dick's voice rose stridently to popular airs, from "Oh, You Beautiful Doll" to "Any Time's a Good Time When Hearts Are Light and Merry."

I suggested to Feodora that we jump into my machine and motor down the road to meet Philomela and my grandfather.

Shortly after our departure Rodney Rutledge was strolling around to the other end of the porch. His embarrassment left him as he smoked his cigar. And in spite of his seeming reluctance, he had always secretly wished for such an occasion as this on which to make his first attempt at golf. Down the road he saw two machines approaching. Feodora and I were in the one machine. In the other car, piled with golf bags, Rutledge saw the man whom he guessed was Baron Laszlo. He dismissed his jealous uneasiness when he saw the silvery hair above my grandfather's kindly eyes; the man whom he had momentarily feared as a rival was past seventy, Rutledge thought.

He gave but little attention to the baron. Rutledge was watching the graceful, simple and natural attitude of a slumbrous-eyed brunette at the wheel of the baron's car, slowly threading her way through the other machines that blocked the

narrow driveway toward the house. It was Philomela!

"Cheer up, Mr. Rutledge!" exulted Feodora's cheery voice from the other machine. "She'll give you her promise or we'll hold her prisoner here," she laughed in triumph, as Rutledge waved his hat violently.

Rutledge had seen them first — Philomela and the baron — winding round the driveway to the porch, where they alighted and the crowd closed in on them. Philomela was hugged and kissed by the feminine contingent and my grandfather's back was pounded and his hand wrenched in the enthusiasm of their greetings.

Rutledge was soon introduced to the lovable old baron, towering in the midst of these people who had gathered to welcome him to California; and presently Rutledge's interest shifted back to the lovely Philomela. For after all, had he not neglected his business to come to this affair — just to see her? Had he not determined to propose to her this very day?

Rodney Rutledge felt that he had not neglected his business to no purpose when Philomela, the Zagrab Houri, said what she did say to him before they returned to San Francisco with the Melloni family. And when he told her how he had loved her since the first time he heard her singing "Carlo Baldi" at the theatre, that not a day had passed since then when she was not in his thoughts, Philomela told him that her mu-

sings were often upon him; for a long time, she told him.

"How long?" he asked wonderingly.

"Since we tangoed at 'Cæsar's,'" she replied demurely.

The time has come to close my narrative. The marriage of Gabrielle and Rutledge has been celebrated. My last duty is to record the announcement. My readers can judge of my emotions and reluctance to leave off describing the lovable associates out of whose influence I developed the elements of right choice and high purpose, without which the chivalry I inherited from the Oylers and the aristocratic blood of the baron would have been unavailing.

The happy wedding of Dick — my boyhood's chosen friend, and the ceremony at Zara left only one thing to be desired — the happiness of my partner, Rutledge. His marriage to Gabrielle marks the end of tragedy and the climax of romance. I may say (I apologize for faintly alluding to some unpleasant characters whom I was obliged to mention) that I am amply repaid for a few moments of pain by the satisfaction I have felt at having been able to speak of the many noble friends who people my beautiful world. And this is, indeed, the truth.

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